A MOTHER OF UNBORN GENERATIONS

STUART KENCARDEN

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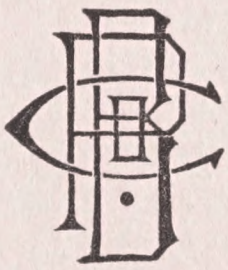
A Mother *of* Unborn Generations

A NOVEL

BY

Stuart Kencarden



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PROLOGUE

THREE young men, ranging in ages from twenty-two to twenty-five, sat listening to vocal and instrumental music of familiar and popular airs borne on the smoke-laden atmosphere of a New York east side concert garden. They appeared much at ease and in harmonious accord with their environments as they dreamily scanned the surroundings, occasionally spoke and sipped at a beverage from glasses confronting them upon a table around which they sat.

The place of entertainment was a fairly large auditorium. It had stage at one end, elevated a few feet above the small orchestra in front and the audience beyond, with proscenium, wings and drop scene at the back containing a rural view of sylvan beauty and stream. The stage as well as the body of the hall possessed many of the usual embellishments of such places. At each outward corner of the former a huge potted palm reared its stately proportions ceilingward and mural decorations of bunting, flags and strings of festooned imitation flowers gave color to the latter.

All over the hall sat people smoking and drinking at small round tables. The surroundings would have been anything but edifying to those of refined and lofty tastes despite how refreshing and entertaining they might be for the time being to less fastidious mortals and overwrought nerves, brains and muscles.

There were plenty of the latter present here as there might have been at many other gatherings in the great city, for they were a fair representative of its denizens, young, old, vigorous, worn, decrepit, dissipated, blasé, loud, boastful, staid and quiet, and the atmosphere and environments seemed to afford much satisfaction and pleasure.

Upon both the animate and inanimate surrounding objects the numerous bright glittering lights shed a soft radiance and sparkle, throwing a glowing mantle of sheen over much that was tawdry and sordid, and with the imbibed potations lending a sparkle to the eye and a flush to the countenances, imparting a healthy tint to unhealthy, worn countenances, softening harsh features of men, making painted faces of women shine with the glow of health, mellowing the scene into one harmonious picture as at eventide the mild rays of the orb of day with the gathering soft twilight will mellow the face of nature and make it radiant.

The lights and the sparkle, the sheen and the glitter, the braid and the tinsel, the cheap decorations, all hid much that was sordid and mean in the surroundings as the imbibed potations hid much that was hollow, forbidding, dark and base in the minds and in the countenances of those gathered about.

Drinking, laughter, jest and raillery went on apace and kept in harmonious accord with song and music. The hard realities of life—the struggle for existence, the passing unremitting years, the light purse, the sometimes failing health, even the stalking spectre of death about—were all forgotten for the time being, except by the few. All over the hall flitted waiters to the sound of clinking glasses, taking orders, replenishing empty glasses by filled ones of various beverages. The waiters were kept very busy as the night was the last of the week,

and as was generally the case on Saturday night.

The vocal music was rendered by five females, the main lines of the ditties by a female of uncertain age with rather melodious voice. The latter was very much powdered and dyed and resplendent in raiments of many gorgeous hues, the lower garments reaching but to the knees. She was assisted in the chorus by the other four, equally powdered, dyed and gorgeously clad companions who were of fewer years, but of less harmonious voices. They rose from their seats at the rear of the stage and came forward to the other side as they joined in the refrain.

"Say Au Revoir, but not Good-bye," was the popular ditty at this instant that was being rendered. It was much in vogue at this period and heard far and near. Here it gave the utmost satisfaction for encore after encore called for its repetition, some of the audience even joining in the refrain in their evident great pleasure or satisfaction experienced by the melody.

From a close scrutiny of the appearance of the motley throng of men and women belonging to the many walks of life, chiefly those who tread the hard road of existence, most of them by far of the masculine gender, there being but a sprinkling of the other sex present, the inference could be readily drawn that the before-mentioned organs, the nerves, brains and muscles, were much in need of recreation, rest and repair. There were a fortunate few, however, whose paths through life seemed to be easy ones, but these were evidently rarities. It was thoroughly an American throng, American in all at least that goes to make up this great modern nation with all its divers types of humanity, they or their near forbear drawn from all quarters of the globe, generally with pale strained countenances indica-

tive of the hard and eager struggle for existence, wealth and uplift.

The great diversity of racial types present could be seen at a glance. Upon the countenances of many could be traced unmistakably some peculiar imprint of feature of the race from which they had originally sprung. Besides this great diversity of national lineamental stamp there was that strange variety of cast of features, much resembling the lower species of the animal creation, among a sprinkling of these mixed human types. Some faces were broad and ox-like in contour with ox-like stolidity looking therefrom; some were narrow and weasel-like with weasel like cunning stamped thereon; some were porcine with porcine grossness gazing out their eyes; some were Simian with that peculiar Simian look of wisdom about them; some were even bird-like with bird-of-prey lust gleaming from their countenances.

Sitting at a table alone was the pale, worn countenanced sweat-shop slave, an importation of a few years from the northeast of Europe, the descendant of generations of stunted minds and bodies from which nearly all had been squeezed that was squeezable by the more fortunate brethren of the earth, and who was now undergoing a similar squeezing process in the new land which he had sought for betterment and uplift. He smiled sickily as he sipped his drink and the fumes of the liquor mounted to his weakened brain.

At another table was a group of boisterously mirthful well-fed looking men of all ages. Among them was the unmistakable fat body and porcine face of an ex-bartender who had fallen heir to a political sinecure by his skill and obsequiousness in serving out concoctions across the bar of a Bowery saloon to influential and popular politicians of

that neighborhood. He now, with his companions, laughed heartily at his own gross joke, or rather what was considered a joke by them, in which the name of the principal coin of the realm figured prominently, made in reply to a request for alms by a rather pretty Salvation Army lass who had ventured within the portals of the amusement place.

Amid a dense cloud of smoke arising from another table sat a group of low-paid, pale-faced clerks who managed to make some pretense at leading a fast life by the aid of cheap rooms, cheap meals and the mid-day lunch counter of the drinking saloon. They assumed a general pronounced air of cynicism as became men of the world as they sipped their beer, puffed at their cigarettes and ogled some painted and dyed females at another nearby table. There was a sprinkling of the latter types of females all about the place sitting drinking with men or in small groups at tables alone.

A group of three of these gaudily painted and bedizened ones were sipping beer, giggling somewhat loudly and casting occasional glances at any nearby member of the opposite sex who showed some evidence of prosperity or affluence. Those nearby who showed the most evidence of this, with the exception of the circle amid which was the ex-bartender, was the group of three young men first mentioned who had been sitting quietly viewing the surroundings. These soon became the target of the glances from the corresponding number of female eyes.

They were medical students making a farewell round of the city sights before separating for their homes after the conclusion of the spring course, which departure they had delayed till the subsequent annual graduation which had just taken place, one of them to take part in it, and two of

them but to witness it. Though they showed no undue evidence of affluence, yet their superiority to the generality of those by whom they were surrounded was manifest at a glance. In their refined and cultured looking countenances in their physical proportions and dress, and in their general demeanor they showed this superiority to the generality of those present. Their bodies were of that tall, straight, well-developed mould, their faces of that marked stamp with regular, clear-cut features and bright, alert, intelligence looking from their eyes, not uncommon among the American middle class where wealth does not injure and poverty does not crush. They were from divers and distant parts of this great country thrown together as comrades and companions by attending the same college and residing at the same boarding house.

The eldest, Hilkley Tweedwell, had graduated with honors, and was to depart immediately for his home in a small city of Iowa and begin practice. Caldwell Winngath, who came from a small town in western Pennsylvania, had to attend college another year to complete his course, and John Longworth, who was from the far West, the youngest of the trio, had but completed his first year.

At last the three females succeeded in attracting the notice of the young men.

"They are not bad looking," remarked Caldwell Winngath, apparently a trifle flattered by the notice of the opposite sex.

"Why," he went on, critically eying one of them referred to, "I believe that youngest and lightest blond would be really good looking if she hadn't so much paint plastered on her face."

"And less dye plastered on her hair," broke in Hilkley Tweedwell with a laugh. John Lang-

worth was silent, but smiled at the remarks after glancing at the females.

The popular ditty that had been rendered to three or four encores had at last died away amid hand-clapping of lesser boisterousness, and silence reigned save for the hum of voices and the occasional rattle of glasses.

"What do you fellows say to joining them?" asked Hilkley Tweedwell. He put the question slowly with a quizzical look as if in doubt of the others acceeding to his suggestion.

"You know," he went on apologetically, without waiting for a reply, "this is likely our last night together, and we'll soon be scattered to the four winds of the earth; so we ought to have a good time for the last—the last at least for me, with you two. I'll be off to the West to-morrow likely, or the next day at the latest, to remain there. You, Winngath, go to old Pennsylvania to come back here again, and you Langworth—what?"

"Yes, what!" echoed John Langworth with a thoughtful, far-away look. "I hardly know what. I may stay in New York and get something to do for the summer until college opens up in the fall. It will lessen the drain on my means, and be the wisest plan I think—much better than going to the expense of going all the way out West and coming back." There was a growing sadness in his voice as he proceeded and a wistfulness in his look.

It was the thought of his companions returning to their respective homes and friends, and his own homelessness and almost friendlessness, and the confronting problems that beset him that made him sad. He lapsed into a deeply meditative silence.

"Well, don't let us get sad now," broke in Hilkley Tweedwell with forced gayety. "We've all been working hard until lately; so let us relax and be

merry for the time being; we all have serious problems enough confronting us. Drink up and let us join the ladies, who are evidently desirous of our company, and let us be merry."

Caldwell Winngath nodded an agreeing assent to the proposition, but John Langworth shook his head.

"Why not?" asked Tweedwell.

The one addressed did not reply immediately. He avoided the other's gaze and looked away in the distance. "I hardly feel in the humor," he then said wearily. "I feel like thinking to-night; thinking of the past and—and the future. You know it is good to do that sometimes," he went on, turning his face with a sad smile to his companions; "and I have not had much time to do that lately. But"—he suddenly changed his manner and tone to that of some genuine cheerfulness—"don't let me spoil you fellows' fun. Go, if you wish, and leave me to think out the problems of the future." He laughed deprecatingly at them.

The two eyed him quizically in silence for two or three moments.

He returned a bland look of indifference.

"Well, you are a queer fellow, Langworth," remarked Hilkley Tweedwell with a smile and a shake of the head.

The one addressed nodded. "I know it," he rejoined, with an apologetic laugh. "It is good to know one's failings."

"I always thought you were a little prudish," went on the former affably; "but not so much as all this. However, Winngath"—he turned to the one addressed—"we'll not spoil him; and I know he's a good fellow who selfishly would not want to spoil our amusement; so he'll excuse us for a time without any ill feeling, and we'll leave him to his medi-

tations—leave our Joseph." He rose with a smile and Winngath followed him in his movements. "Yes," he repeated, as he stood over his seated companion and smote him playfully on the shoulder with the flat of his hand as a parting salute, "we'll leave our Joseph to his meditations for a little while."

They both turned laughing from the other, who good-naturedly returned the laugh, and they strode away with an occasional look back and laugh and seated themselves at the table among the females sought, to whom they now directed their entire attention, and the latter joined in the laughter.

John Langworth's mood was not a very cheerful one when he was left alone, though it was with a feeling of some relief that he saw his companions leave him. It annoyed him to be persuaded against his will, and he was glad that he did not have to submit to much of this. His eyes did not follow his companions though he heard them laughing with their new-found associates, and heard the name "Joseph" repeated by some of the females, but he paid no heed. A sadness grew upon him with a deeply meditative mood, and he soon became oblivious of these matters.

His present loneliness did not concern him much. His thoughts were soon far away, though he looked toward the stage; so far away that he was oblivious of the import of the words of the present ditty that now rang loudly throughout the hall from the somewhat discordant voices of the chorus.

"East side, west side, all around the town," was now the refrain. But it might have been the previous one for all he was conscious of the contrary. He thought of his far-away home, the only one he had ever known, far away in the great Northwest where the plains merge into the foothills of the

lofty mountains; of his kind and loving mother and thoughtful father both taken from him in his early manhood, and they in their early prime; of his loneliness with no kin nearer than uncles and cousins; of the stories he had heard of the landing and meeting of his parents in the present city and their journeying to the great Northwest. It all increased his sadness and loneliness. Especially did the recalling of the incidents connected with the meeting of his parents in this great city. He had heard the story from the lips of both, and cherished it in his memory. Especially did he dwell upon the incidents of it now.

John Langworth's sire, after whom he was named, had left a small croft in the West of Scotland, and few near relatives behind to seek fortune in the Western Hemisphere. The voyage had been a rather long and tedious one. The few friends he had made on the journey had departed quickly at landing bound for their respective destinations in the East, South and nearby West, he was bound for the far West, leaving him without a single acquaintance when they had taken their departure from the rotund building at the most southerly point of Manhattan Island where steerage passengers, the class by which he had come, were once wont to be landed, and where many thousands of newcomers first set foot on American soil. He was advised to remain at the landing place till the time of the near departure of the train, which was to leave the morning following his landing in the afternoon, then be conveyed to the station with the many bound in the same direction as himself.

With varying feelings of emotion, sad and hopeful, he watched the coming and going of the tide of humanity, the exodus from many lands, the seekers like himself of that betterment that their

own land did not offer; watched the afternoon merge into evening and the last of the human tide depart that was to depart that day, taking with it the last of his acquaintances; watched those who, like himself, were to remain over night, and there was a goodly number from the far northern country than his own, bound like himself to the far Northwest, but unlike himself in family groups and companions, settle themselves into easy and comfortable positions among their hand-baggage and prepare their evening repast; watched from the distance where he seated himself the repast consumed, the night draw apace and the few dim gas jets of the great rotund building turned into light shedding their dim rays among dun figures and outlines and the gloom beyond; watched a stalwart figure amid a great group of these children of the North produce an oblong instrument, which proved to be an accordion, from which strains of waltz music emanated awakening into activity those by whom he was surrounded, who formed themselves into a huge circle of embracing couples and moved with measured movements to the harmonious strains; watched the great ring of swaying bodies gently swaying to and fro as they circled around in couples and in one great ring to the rhythmic music and measured movements of stalwart limbs till a drowsiness stole over him as he watched it all, and the figures became dim, shadowy and ghostlike to his drowsy faculties moving amid the dim light of the surroundings and the dark background beyond.

This John Langworth was familiar with the bothy dances in the country districts of Scotland, but the movements and figures were considerably different to these. The manner of the bodies swaying gently in rhythmic time to the music and measured movements of limbs was considerable of a

curiosity to him, and he viewed it all with great interest. Besides, there was much that was pleasing to him in the sight though he did not dance himself. He liked to see the well-developed figures of both men and women, the latter with cream and rose complexions and generally lightish hair—his own was very dark—moving with such nicely measured precision to the strains of the music. Especially was one youthful female figure pleasing to his sight, and he watched her movements with increasing interest. Finally, the dancers tired, the music died away and the participants sought improvised couches made of rugs, blankets or any other hand-baggage spread on the benches or the floor, and were soon apparently as reposeful as if in comfortable beds.

He spread his own blanket on the floor and himself upon it, drew his portmanteau under his shoulders with a sigh, withdrew a pocket flask from his coat pocket, poured into a small vessel that had surmounted the flask the liquid diluted spirit contents of the latter which he drank at a draught, then he again sought his coat pocket, producing a small Bible which he generally carried with him, as his fathers before him had done for generations since the troublesome days when men had to fight to maintain their religious tenets, and the fighting had made them and their descendants stanch in the faith. Then he stretched himself out as comfortably as possible and opened the book to a turned-down page which was the Twenty-third Psalm, and read audibly to himself. This was his favorite Psalm. When he had read it wholly through he closed the book replacing it in his pocket. Then to himself he repeated the most beautiful lines of the Psalm, which he loved so

well, and knew so well without the book. Then his lids closed and he slept.

When he woke in the morning busy preparations for departure by an early train were in operation, and he soon left the great rotund building behind in company with a considerable body of wayfarers whose forms had become familiar to him from the previous evening. Then the great city was left in the rear, and anon villages and cultivated fields were passing with great rapidity. But as these strange sights of the face of nature passed before him with great rapidity he was becoming more familiar with the faces about him, and especially with one female face and form that had interested him the night previously, and less lonely. By the time the journey was broken and resumed at Chicago he was on friendly speaking terms with his fellow Norse wayfarers, who generally knew a little of his native tongue, and when the city of St. Paul was in the rear he had become very intimate with them. Before he had gone much further he had decided to cast his lot with them. This he did when they got further toward the setting sun where the plains merge into the foothills, and it was not long till a marriage took place with him and a daughter of the Norse race.

The present John Langworth, tall, straight of limb and body, with well-shaped regular features, was the offspring of this union, and the only one. The parents, though very industrious and careful people, did not accumulate a great deal of this world's goods; nor did either of them live to be old.

When one went, the other soon followed, and the son was left, before he had reached his majority, with some property and a little monetary inheritance. He owed, however, a great deal to his par-

ents, for he was a fair blending of the natures and looks of both with his prepossessing person, sound common sense and steadfastness. His parents had been desirous of his becoming a medical practitioner, and with this purpose in view, when he reached his majority, he sought the East.

Much of all this had passed through his mind, of his home, of his dead parents, and what had been their desires of him as he sat within plain hearing of the chorus of voices in song on the stage, the sound of laughter and voices of men and women nearby and the clink of glasses.

He had not noticed a pause in the singing till a giggle and a familiar name close-by fell upon his ears attracting his attention, and he looked up in the direction whence they came and he caught sight of a laughing female face regarding him. "Joseph" was the name he had heard. Now as he looked up it was repeated by the same lips and so was the giggle and by the female laughingly regarding him.

But she was not the only one so regarding him he realized as he looked around, for the other two females, and his two companions, who had all risen together and were moving past him toward the exit, joined in the laughter.

"We'll see you later, old man!" cried Hilkley Tweedwell, still laughing with the others. "Take care of yourself." His two companions waved each a hand to him as they turned from him.

John Langworth looked after them but did not reply. As they turned from him, he caught the gaze of the dark eyes of the female who had previously addressed him, who was in the rear. She paused and regarded him for an instant with a strange, puzzled, quizzical expression of amusement. Then she broke into laughter again.

"Yes, Joseph," she cried, "we'll see you later.

By-bye, ta, ta, Joseph. By-bye, au revoir as the song goes," she went on, moved to considerable merriment, while the others paused regarding her and the one addressed with amusement.

"Au revoir; you know what that means," she explained with a nod of interrogation and a gesture of the hand as she backed a few steps from him; "you know that means to meet again."

She waved her hand at him and broke into a long inane giggle, the inanest imaginable, he thought, as she turned with her amused companions and moved toward the exit laughing.

The sound of her voice and her giggle rang in his ears for a time after she and the others had passed out of his sight, and a vision of a pair of dark, laughing eyes, a painted face and a head of yellow dyed hair was before him. There was something about the sound of her voice that reminded him of a nanny goat's wavering cry, and there was much that made him think that one of those ruminating quadrupeds possessed as much brains as the departed female. He guessed aright that there was no more significance in the name Joseph to her as she had used it, than there would have been in any other name. Tom, Dick or Harry would have been the same to her, he believed. She had just heard his companions use it and believed it was his name. This was the conclusion at which he arrived not only from the tone of laughter, but from the glance and general expression of countenance.

John Langworth was considerably depressed when he was left alone, and he felt a little shocked at the turn of affairs despite his efforts to look as lightly upon the matter as he could. He had never thought his companions models of virtue; in fact, he believed few men of their age and circumstances

were. Nevertheless, he could not dispel some feeling of repulsion at them. He called for a glass of beer and tried to forget the matter and centre his thoughts on his immediate surroundings; but all in vain. If his thoughts did not centre on his companions, they were about the female, and he heard her utterance ringing in his ears: "Au revoir, Joseph; that means to meet again," accompanied by the familiar inane giggle, and the powdered face and dyed hair would confront him.

"I think not," he muttered to himself. There was a tone of decision in this, and he turned his thoughts to his future with some success.

The more he thought of his adopted profession the more he felt an unfitness for it. There had been a growing distaste for it with him for some time. This distaste at periods had assumed the form of repugnance of a pronounced nature. Occasionally the feeling had possessed him for a day or two after a visit to the dissecting-room. His presence there so far had been only as a spectator. He had thought that his visits to the place occasionally, watching his fellow students would harden him to the active part he had soon to assume there himself.

Now as he sat musing, some of the scenes he had witnessed there of uncalled-for and unnecessary brutality on the part of his fellow students, and especially by Hilkley Tweedwell, filled him with disgust. He also now recalled another happening connected with the latter fellow student which intensified this disgust.

Hilkley Tweedwell in perfecting himself in obstetrics during his last year at college had taken an extra course in that branch of medical science at a nearby lying-in institution. One night recently, when in John Langworth's company, he had received a call from the institution to attend an out-

door case well down in the poor district of the lower East Side, and had persuaded the other to accompany him there to render any assistance necessary.

John Langworth had accompanied him as requested, but he had wished afterward he had not done so, for the unnecessary grossness of some acts that a pretence had been made to pass off as professional zeal, which he had been a witness of on a poor, suffering human being lying amid want and poverty of the direst, in a poor apology for a home, had filled him with disgust and pain.

Now as he recalled this scene his disgust was greatly intensified. For the time being the whole world seemed brutal, nature and all. This same thought had come upon him frequently lately since he came East to this great city. It had not seemed so before when he was amid nature's scenes and nature's human beings; but here seemed to dominate brutality, lust, cruelty and greed. All that was above the brute seemed artificiality, and all naturalness brutality. As he thought of the great city with all its wealth, poverty, suffering and useless squandering of often ill-gotten gains wrung from the hard and unhealthy labor of poor suffering human beings, and the mercilessness of his fellows to their fellows, much of the place seemed to him a blot on civilization, and he felt he detested it. He had no idea there could be so much poverty and misery extant until he came East. And it all seemed such an incongruity here in this great land where nature is so prodigal in her bestowal of all of man's needs, and much more, that pinch-faced armies should go on so desperately battling for a crust or a pittance.

In the older lands and older civilizations where nature is less generous in her bestowal, and where

pinching poverty and want are as old as time, and the problems of meeting these conditions have been the problem of the ages, such a state of things appears not so much out of place.

Though he had been but a few months East, yet he was familiar with every phase of the great city's Titanic throb, every pulsation of its great arteries that moved it to its untiring activity and unlagging, feverish life from early morning till late into the night. Along the great glittering highways by night he had watched the thoughtless, heartless show of arrogant pride and wealth strut its marshalled forces, flaunting its opulence amid the glamor and scintillating sparkle of the myriad lights of the avenues and tinselled palaces. By day he had seen the princely mansions where opulence and ease bask surrounded and possessed of wealth that would dwarf the Midias' hoard of old, and splendor that rivals that of kings. He had read accounts of the splendid pageants of wealth and fashion where plebeian new-made dollars were united to old lineage and family title, and as much wealth bartered for a coronet as would keep a hundred families from want the rest of their days. He had seen the lower city's fetid, crowded byways where shambling poverty, degradation and crime lurk, and where the thousands perish physically and morally. He had heard some of its sleek divines in fine temples discoursing lengthily on fine and hair-splitting points of theology to smug, well-fed looking broods, some of them battening upon the hard and unhealthy labor of poverty-stricken unfortunates perishing in soul and body. He had seen all this and much more that at times had moved him to pity, indignation and pain, and he had come to question the truth of the creed early taught to him, the creed of his fathers.

As he went on musing he felt the West, the great wide West calling him back, and he longed to go. He told himself how unfit he was for making himself a medical practitioner, and how unfit and unsuited for its duties when he had perfected himself in its science, if he were ever able to do so. Soon his mind was made up. He would leave it and the city behind for good in a day or two. He would not say anything to his companions of this decision. He would not disabuse the mind of Caldwell Winngath of the belief that they were to meet again in the autumn and resume their studies together. He did not want to hear any of their persuasion and jibes against the course he was taking. He would merely drop out of their lives.

This decision he commenced to carry out immediately. The day following the departure of his companions to their respective homes he left the city behind with a feeling that he did not care if he never saw the place again. As the great cities, one after the other passed before his view, and were left behind; and, finally, the small hamlets and the great plains of the West confronted him, a feeling of calm and satisfaction possessed him to which he had been a stranger for a long time.

A Mother of Unborn Generations

CHAPTER I.

In a bronzed and bearded figure, with wide-brimmed sombrero, a face roughened by years of exposure to excessive heat and cold, a well-knit frame, erect, showing considerable evidence of physical strength and endurance, though scarcely fleshy enough to be exactly symmetrical, and the aspect of a man between the age of thirty-five and forty, that rode from the plains upon the back of a sturdy broncho into a small railroad town in northern Montana, with the hot midday sun beating down upon him, none would have recognized John Langworth, the thoughtful, pale-faced clear-cut featured medical student of a decade past. Nevertheless only ten years had passed though he looked fifteen years older at the least. Lines upon his face that he showed no evidence of when he was first introduced to the reader had formed and deepened, adding a firmness to his well-shaped mouth and a keenness to his dark gray eyes, and a few gray hairs could be descried among the brown of his locks. The latter, however, were not the result of dissipation or illness, which is often the case, but due rather to the hard life which

he had led of rough work and exposure, and his natural manner of deep thought.

He had followed in turn the pursuits of cowboy, farmer, miner and cattle raiser. But throughout it all he had not accumulated any great amount of the world's goods. He had come some considerable distance from the ranch jointly owned by him and another, and he showed some evidence of travel. There was dust upon him, beaten from the prairie grass by the tread of his horse where paths and roadways had been absent, but not so much as there otherwise might have been owing to the fall of recent heavy rains in the neighborhood. He was about to make a journey by rail into the neighboring State of Dakota to settle up some property transactions, the sale of some land he owned near the town of Ross, which had been partly carried out by correspondence; then he intended to journey as far as Bismarck to visit some friends and relatives. A desire had possessed him for some time for a vacation, for he had worked so steadily for a long time, and he decided to take one.

After having his horse taken charge of at a hostelry, and partaking of some needed refreshments himself, he sought the railway station, and began his wait for the train. He judged it would be a considerable time, and late as usual, and he was not mistaken.

After reaching the small wooden platform he relieved himself of his hand-bag, which was of rather modest proportions, and his coat which he had been carrying under his arm, by tossing them carelessly upon a near-by bench and began pacing up and down the length of the platform, somewhat impatiently at first, his movements as he did so indicating the possession of a fair share of manly

strength, grace and agility. Indeed, as he moved about in the easy attire of woolen shirt, the one garment visibly covering the upper part of his form, his shoulders broad and his frame erect, his face bronzed to the color of his mustache, his eyes looking keenly from beneath the broad-brimmed hat, he looked the typical man of the plains and far from a weakling.

Then slackening his pace after a time and finally coming to a stand opposite an open space between two buildings that gave him an unobstructed view ahead he stood gazing across the wide prairie whence he had come, with its long, rank grass broiling under the rays of the hot, clear sun, and sea of simmering vapor rising therefrom. Though his eyes were rivetted in the one direction, to where the prairie was lost in the distant haze yet the view was subordinated to other scenes his mind's eye resurrected of other places and other days. As he stood there much of the happenings of the past decade, since he returned from the East to take up the life he was now following, swept before his mental vision producing varied flitting emotions. In these emotions there was nothing akin to egotistic pride or self-satisfaction at his achievements even though he had made some substantial headway and position in the world. On the contrary, he was inclined to belittle what he had done. It seemed, in weighing his opportunities, he could have done much more and ought to have done much better. Then he found himself arguing that it would all make no difference in the end. Though he was seldom prone to take a pessimistic view of life, yet at this instant there seemed to be an emptiness in existence and a littleness in all one's endeavors, and he found himself

questioning the use of it all and the wisdom of the aim and end of things.

He was in this reflective mood when finally the train came along, awakening him from his reverie. He was the only passenger waiting for it, and when it came to a stand he sprang aboard with his belongings and had scarcely sunk into the first vacant seat when it was moving again.

John Langworth found his mind occupied for a time gazing out the open window at passing objects. But he was familiar with most of these sights—the broad, rolling prairie, an occasional cattle ranch in the distance, a near-by corral, a mountainous bluff standing out clear against the far-off horizon, and at intervals a dwelling or farm house—and his mind soon became reflective of other matters.

He found occupation for a time eying his fellow passengers, of which there was a goodly number present in the same coach of a pronounced motley stamp, speculating whence one or the other came, where they might be going, what might be their station in life and what might be their aim, if they had any. From this his reflections carried him back to his student days in New York, and he thought of his fellow medical students, Hilkley Tweedwell and Caldwell Winngath, of whom he had never heard any more since his parting from them a decade past, and he wondered what had come of them, if they were both in the land of the living and if they had made a success of life and their profession.

He wondered what like a doctor he would have made himself if he had remained with the profession in place of abandoning it as he had done; whether he would have been a failure, or of mediocre ability, or a success, and whether he

would have been a married man with a growing family now.

He could not bring his mind to the belief that he would ever have made a decided success of the profession; he thought he might have attained to mediocre ability at the most; therefore, he believed he had been right in abandoning it.

He still went on musing on one subject and another as the train rushed on, one thought crowding the other in rapid sequence. There was something in the speeding motion stimulating to his mental faculties. But after a time his thoughts became less clear and definite with this crowding, rapid transition, and his general grasp of the conditions of existence less lucid. There seemed to be a growing, undefined unreality about much. Even life itself at times seemed to be unreal and shadowy.

The journey for the first few hours was as uneventful as most railway journeys. There was little to break the monotony save the occasional stopping at a cluster of dwellings, generally shack-like in appearance, called a town. But though no untoward happening or excitement marked its beginning and early stages it was not destined to end so.

When the banks of the river were reached, running closely parallel with the railway, and night was approaching, evidence of the recent heavy rains was visible in the swollen and strongly running current.

It swirled along, its dark bosom moved into wide undulations, then anon in short and violent wavelets dashing against the low banks close to the railway tracks.

The day had been excessively hot, the atmosphere humid in the extreme. As the night drew apace

dark threatening clouds formed and hovered in the northeastern sky, unmistakably heralding an approaching storm. Then as the darkness overhead increased to dense blackness and the landscape took on the aspect of early night, the wind, that had almost died away, arose suddenly in violence stirring the river's bosom into wavelets, bending with giant strength the trees lining the banks, rending and cracking the branches, tearing and hurling its way through them till they moaned and cried in great pain. Then above the sound of the wind and the rush of the train came the ominous roar of thunder, low and deep, anon loud and vibrant, splitting the blackness above in twain in zigzag lines of forked fire, its sudden glare at brief intervals lighting up for an instant the dark landscape and the blackness of the river's bosom, followed by a deafening roar of unrestrained violence. Then the storm burst in all its wild fury, the wind blew in fierce gusts, the raindrops descended in great spots, then in one pouring, driving torrent drenching the thirsty earth, rushing to the river in thousand streamlets; the thunder roared and crashed, the lightning flashed terribly and awe-inspiringly. The train rushed on through it all but with reduced speed.

John Langworth sat watching through the drenched window, as best he could, the fury of the storm with much interest and some awe; watching the violence of the wind among the trees, their swaying, rending, cracking and breaking; listening to the roaring and crashing of the thunder; watching the glaring flashes of lightning lighting up the black landscape and the dark river; viewing the torrential rain, and wondering where it all came from and when it would cease its drenching down-

pour. He was deep in the latter occupation when a sudden jolting, rending, crashing, not of the storm, broke in upon his thoughts, its violence throwing him almost from his seat, banishing everything from his mind save a hazy realization of these later manifestations of violence. He had scarcely time to think what these sounds and movements indicated, when in an instant the coach in which he sat with his fellow passengers swayed violently far over to one side amid the continued splintering, rending sounds of smashing wood and glass, and the dark river on which his eyes had been bent seemed to rise suddenly toward him and in a moment more he felt himself engulfed in the flood, the cold water everywhere immersing him. The cool water seemed to restore his dazed faculties immediately, and he realized that an accident had taken place and he had got to make an effort for his life. For a moment or two the weight of water and some other impediments of a firmer nature seemed to hold him down; then he felt himself moving, seemingly impelled upward along with the force of the current and pressed through an appeture of the coach. All he heard now was the singing of rushing water in his ears. In an instant more he had reached the surface; but for a moment or two, with the deluging rain and turbulent river tempestuously driven by the fury of the gale against his upturned face, depriving him of his breath and sight, and the blackness above him and about him, he was unaware of his good fortune. However, as his head turned from the fury of the elements, a vivid flash of lightning revealed to him for a moment the scene of violence, and he heard the tumult of the gale, the rending of branches and trees, the screeching of the wind mingling with the hoarse shouts of men

and the shrill screaming of despairing women. He saw that he was near a partly submerged coach, past which he was being swept, and knowing his power as a swimmer, realized he could reach it with a few strokes of his strong arms.

A moment more he was about to strike out in the direction of the coach when a terrific roar of thunder followed by a brilliant flash of lightning revealed a dark object with a white, upturned face sweeping past him and he heard from it a pitiful, terrified cry of despair. It was so shrill and despairing that it might have been the voice of a woman, and in its apparent utter helplessness and terror it appeared as such, and appealed at once to him. He did not consider his own danger for a moment—that a few strokes of his arms might take him into the river's most violent current and possibly beyond his strength to combat, while the same number of strokes in the opposite direction would most likely land him in safety.

When the cry rang in his ears again, the appeal reaching him almost before the other had died away, he made a plunge in the direction whence it had come, but the form had disappeared swallowed up by the fury of the gale and his hands came in contact with nothing but water, and he saw nothing but turbulent blackness about him; but he battled amid it all in the hope of rendering assistance to a perishing fellow mortal. The opportunity, however, seemed to be passing rapidly, and he began to think of his own safety, of how he would battle to the shore. His next thought suggested to him the wisdom of striking out immediately for this haven.

Though he was a powerful swimmer, and not unduly concerned for his own safety, nevertheless

he was moved to some anxiety at a full realization of what weighty impediments to his efforts were his clothes and riding-boots.

He was just about to put forth some efforts shoreward when a vivid glare of extraordinary brilliancy, followed by another and another of similar illuminative power accompanied almost at the same instant by a terrific crash of heaven's ordnance and a quick succession of similar reports like the rapid firing of artillery, revealed to him the object he had sought.

He saw now that it was the head of a bearded-faced man that appeared on the surface of the water a few yards from him, and he struggled toward it. Now there was no cry of despair in that direction. He could not tell if there was any struggle. He saw the white face, however, illumed clearly thrice in succession and his strong arms cleft the water toward it. But the next flash revealed only two disappearing arms and hands stretched heavenward near him. He knew that in an instant they would disappear and with one mighty effort he threw himself toward them and caught one hand as it was sinking beneath the tide.

Thus arrested in its descent the body shot upward before him and he was enabled to take a better grip of it. He realized then that the struggling of the man was likely over.

Now he thought of the best means of reaching the shore, and as he could not see more than a few yards from him even with the aid of the flashing lightning, which revealed nothing but the turbulent water, he did not know in what direction to strike out. A little reflection, nevertheless, soon indicated to him the best course in the circumstances.

This was to make just enough effort to maintain

his buoyancy upon the water and allow the current to carry him along to some bend in the river, then when he reached that he could use his husbanded strength in an effort at landing.

Thus John Langworth drifted down the river amid the swiftly-running tempestuous current, with his burden, holding the head of the inanimate form as well out the water as he could. The storm seemed to be still raging at its height. The wind lashed the water in unrestrained fury; the rain descended in torrents as if the whole heavens had opened up its sluice-gates; the thunder roared and crashed and the lightning flashed as if a host of Titans of the sky were waging their gigantic warfare.

Finally after what seemed to have been a long time of drifting, though the actual time had been short since the accident and the precipitation into the water, a flash of lightning revealed that which appeared like the river bank near at hand and he strenuously put forth all his strength—strength that was now greatly enfeebled and nearly exhausted—in a supreme effort to reach the goal of safety.

Soon his feet touched some solid substance, and he dragged himself and his burden through the shallow water and up the slimy, yielding bank. Then when some few feet away from the river, that was almost level with the banks, he laid the inanimate form upon the ground, thoroughly exhausted from all his efforts, and fell upon the rain-soaked earth too helpless to move for the time being.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN LANGWORTH lay panting on the water-soaked ground, the warm torrential rains beating down upon his drenched form. Too exhausted to scarcely think or move he was almost oblivious to his surroundings for a time and what had happened. He was conscious of the elements warring about him in their unrestrained, relentless fury, that was about all. Dazed thoughts of the companion he had brought to land entered his mind occasionally. He did not know whether the latter was living or dead, when at intervals he was enabled to think somewhat clearly, he could scarcely form any conjecture.

Finally the elements began to abate their wrath. The wind tore through the trees with less unbridled fury, the rain reduced its torrential downpour, and came in exhausted gusts, the thunder roared less triumphantly as if worsted in the battle, and faint, sickly flashes of lightning told of the latter's feeble efforts. At last all sounds and activity ceased save the steady, feeble patter of the rain on the well-soaked ground, the steady swash of the onrushing river.

With this change a gradual recollection of all the happenings of the last hour—for it was not more than an hour since he felt himself losing his equilibrium in the train and was engulfed in the river—dawned lucidly upon his mind till he fully recalled everything with clearness, and now he glanced about him surveying his surroundings.

Night had evidently settled upon the earth though

the darkness was no more intense than during the height of the storm, and one's range of vision was much less obstructed since the decreasing downpour of rain. He could discern the dun sky overhead with not a break in it now; the dark river at his side hurrying and swirling along in one great flood, its banks rising but little above the onrushing tide; the great road of transit nearby, its iron rails glistening faintly through the gloom; the water-soaked trees and grassy ground, the latter with pools of water at intervals of a few feet. He was actually lying partly in one of these pools himself, he realized as he looked about.

He had not the remotest idea how far he was below the place where the wreck had taken place. It might be two or three miles, or it might be ten or fifteen for all he knew or could form an estimate.

He looked a little more closely at the form he had snatched from the river and probably from death, lying near-by him. There were indications that it had moved for he recalled laying it on a slight mound. Now it seemed to have rolled over to lower ground. This indicated that there was likely life in it when he brought it to land. Was there life now, he wondered. He would soon find out, he decided. The latter thought no sooner entered his mind than he rose to his feet with some pain and difficulty to execute his intent. His limbs were stiff and sore, and his head pained him as if it had been contused by striking something severely. Now as he moved about he believed he must have gotten quite a few severe knocks in different parts of his body during the accident.

A few steps brought him to the form of the man lying out at full length. It was evidently a man

neither young nor old, probably about his own age, he saw at the first scrutiny as he knelt closely to it and peered into the face his strained gaze penetrating the darkness. He placed his arm under the head and shoulders raising that part of the body, and placed his free hand upon the man's heart to discover any beating.

But before he had time to locate that sign of life a faintly audible murmur burst from the lips followed by others. They were faint at first then much louder, then the import of the utterance plainly discernible.

"What's the matter?" was the query. "What's the matter?" was the repetition again and again, and finally much louder as the man's eyes opened gazing around and into the other's face.

"There's been a smash-up on the road," John Langworth explained in sympathetic tones as the other's eyes searchingly looked into his own; "and you've been hurt, or—or nearly drowned when the train was thrown in the river."

A perturbed, puzzled expression was the answer to the information, and the eyes of the man searched the countenance of the communicator in silence for a few moments before he spoke.

"And you—you, too, have been in the wreck, and hurt, too," was the answer at last.

"I've been in the wreck, but not hurt," said John Langworth with gentle assurance.

"At least not to any extent," he added.

"But you have," persisted the other. "You must have got a pretty severe knock in the head the way it looks to be bleeding there at the side."

This was news to the one informed and his hand sought his head searchingly after disengaging himself from the prostrate man.

The search revealed a considerable gash above the temple from which a liquid was trickling slowly down the side of the face in a small stream. When he drew his hand away it contained a dark stain which he judged to be blood, and he was somewhat surprised at the revelation.

"It's of no consequence, however," he said, assuringly as he rose to his feet. "Just a small scalp wound. I'll bind it up with my handkerchief. I thought it was merely the rain trickling down my cheek.

"You know, I'm a little bit of a doctor," he went on explaining with a smile as he produced his wet handkerchief and started to bind it about his head. "I studied at a medical college for a year."

"So am I," was the rejoiner with a forced laugh. "I am a considerable bit of a one. At least I think I am for I attended the full course and graduated and practiced for a few years." There was unmistakable evidence of some pride in the tone of utterance which failed not in escaping the hearer though the words might have been interpreted and intended as of modest, deprecating import. The information was imparted as the man rested on his elbow on the ground and looked up at the other.

John Langworth bowed respectfully at this information of superior knowledge. "I would have called for your assistance, doctor, in this matter," he said with earnestness, "if I had known, and you had been in a condition to render it."

The newly revealed medical practitioner seemed encouraged from this utterance.

"I think I am getting better, and will soon be able to move," was his imparted information with assurance in his tone. "In fact, I think I could

move now with a little assistance if you could render it. Just a little; I feel weak, that is all. But—" He paused and glanced around, and then looked inquiringly at the other as if something had suddenly dawned on his mind, then resumed, "but how and in what manner did I get here—here and landed high upon the banks from the water? I have not the faintest idea or recollection. I can recall the smash and being thrown in the water; then being carried down amid the rushing blackness lighted up occasionally by the glare of the lightning, but—but that is all."

"I saw you swept past me, and heard your cry," was the reply with quiet modesty, "and, being a good swimmer, I struck out in your wake. But, owing to the darkness everywhere, except the flashing of lightning at intervals lighting up the surroundings, I had some difficulty in reaching you. But I finally caught you as you were disappearing beneath the water, and drifted down the stream with you till me came near the shore and then we landed."

For a few moments the prostrate man gazed at the other standing by him without breaking the silence. Then he spoke in low tones betraying deep emotion and gratitude, and said:

"It is to you, then, my friend, that I owe my life—not to chance circumstances of being thrown up on the banks by the water, which I thought might be possible at first. Well, for all you have done for me—and no man could do more for another, calling for more gratitude, than one risking his life for another—you have my deep, heartfelt gratitude. It is all I can give you just now. But I will not forget in the future—I will not forget.

"And if there is anything I can do to repay—remember, I will not forget." He shook his head impressively.

John Langworth raised his hand protestingly, then his voice. "It is nothing—nothing—nothing more, at least than anyone would do for another, were it in his power," he said with quiet modesty. "If it had been in your power to do such an act for me, you would have done it I feel sure. And as regards reward," he went on in the same manner, "there is sufficient reward in the service itself, or in the gratitude it wins. So let the matter rest. Say no more about it."

The other bent his head toward the ground as if moved by feelings of deep emotion and gratitude and his eyes became rivetted there meditatively for quite a few seconds, the only sound breaking the stillness being the swash of the river and the faint patter of the rain on the ground.

Finally he looked up inquiringly at his companion, who had also been in deep meditative thought, and broke the silence.

"But where and in what direction are we to go?" he asked. "Have you the remotest idea? We might be a great distance from any habitation or from the location of the wreck."

"I don't think we are far from the latter place or some habitation—at least I hope not," was the reply in reassuring tones.

"And if you could walk with my assistance, we'll follow the railway in the direction from which the river flows and we're bound soon to come to the wreck or to some dwelling."

The one addressed prepared to rise and John Langworth bent down and assisted him to his feet.

Then the stronger man gave his arm to his companion and they moved on with some difficulty through the darkness and the rain stumbling occasionally over the wet, sodden ground.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW steps brought the two men to the railway track which they sought. Then they followed its well-beaten path as being much more preferable to otherwise stumbling along amid the twigs, brush and over the uneven ground.

The rain descended lightly and the walking was not so bad except for the wet, drenched clothes clinging to their tired forms and the difficulty and pain they naturally experienced in such circumstances.

Both exerted themselves, however, as well as they could without thoroughly exhausting themselves, which exhausted condition they had all but reached. And with the exception of an occasional stumble, wherein the more exhausted companion clung more closely to the other, they made fairish good progress. The ground on both sides of the railway was well wooded with brush and trees. It was almost level and rose but a few feet from the onrushing river that could be descried nearby at intervals through the dense and luxuriant foliage.

Everything, with the exception of the railway bespoke the wilderness, and if it had not been for some knowledge of their location they might have doubted their nearness to civilization. Few words were spoken on the way, both being desirous of reserving their almost exhausted strength as much as possible. What little was said was generally of an encouraging nature of one to the other to bear up in the trying circumstances.

Finally after they had traversed a distance they

judged to be about a mile, a bend in the railway showed them the lights of a near-by house some little distance from the track, and they bent their steps in that direction. When they had reached the dwelling and knocked at the door the summons speedily brought a female form in response, to whom John Langworth briefly explained their condition and experience.

The woman told them that she knew of the wreck, which had taken place at a washout of the road a mile or more further up the track, just beyond a hamlet that distance away, whither her husband, who was a track-walker, had gone to render any assistance he could after hearing of the accident. While informing them of this she invited them within to partake of much-needed refreshments and rest, which invitation they accepted with much thankfulness.

John Langworth was anxious, however, to know the extent of the disaster; and after partaking lightly of the refreshments and seeing his companion resting, he signified his desire and intention of going, and left after promising to return. A walk of more than a mile brought him to the hamlet, comprising some half score houses including a hostelry, where he learned the particulars of the wreck that had taken place some little distance beyond, and a few rods further brought him first in sight of it then amid the scene of destruction which was plainly shown by the numerous lights.

Here he saw a considerable concourse of people gathered about in groups despite the falling rain; the stalled cars of a rescue train, which had soon arrived; the coaches of the wrecked train; some slightly injured, some not damaged at all, some on the tracks, some off; the washed out bank and road-

bed, the twisted and broken rails that had caused the accident; the partly sunken locomotive and tender, and the end of one of the submerged coaches projecting from the river, the one he believed he and his companion had occupied.

When he was noticed by his fellow passengers and others of the concourse, and the story told of his own and his companion's escape, manifestations of pleasure and satisfaction were evinced by them, and stories told of many brave rescues and narrow escapes. He learned that the accident had been a rather bad one with the injury of a good many and the loss of quite a few lives, so it was supposed; but the particulars about the latter could not be ascertained until a correct enumeration of the tickets sold and the rescued had been made by the railway employes. However, it had not been so bad as it might have been owing to the reduced speed at which the train was traveling when the washout was reached. The locomotive with the tender had jumped the bent and undermined track, plunging into the river, dragging the baggage-coach, the smoker occupied chiefly by Italian laborers, and the following coach with it, the rest of the train remaining on the track and road-bed, and coming to a stand without much damage.

The loss of life had been confined to the two coaches precipitated into the river, and chiefly to the smoker occupied by the Italian laborers. The injured and rescued had been cared for at the dwellings of the hamlet and were mostly in a fair condition for doing well.

As all had been done that could be done in the line of rescue and caring for the injured and rescued, and the hour was getting late, those about began to make themselves comfortable in the stalled

coaches for the time being, or sought the hamlet hostelry for cheer and rest.

John Langworth sought the latter place and secured accommodations for the night, feeling too utterly tired to proceed further, and disinclined to do so even if conveyance were provided. He awoke the next morning much relieved and refreshed from the night's rest and considerably cheered by the prospect of donning a dry suit of clothes though he was somewhat stiff and sore.

After breakfast he sought the public room of the establishment and mingled with some of the stalled travelers of the wreck who, like himself, had made the place their temporary abode. Before he had time to make inquiries about the companion of his last night's adventure, who he thought might possibly have reached the hotel during the early morning, which he was about to do, he saw a figure approaching him from the opposite side of the room that looked somewhat familiar to him from the previous evening as the one whom he was about to make inquiries for, and, believing he recognized him as such, he turned in greeting.

In the excitement of the stirring events of the previous evening he had not had a very good look at his companion, even in the few minutes in the indifferent light of the track-walker's cottage. He had noticed, however, to some extent, the heighth, figure, features and short, closely-cut beard pointed at the chin in the Vandyke style. Now he recognized these features, but beyond these there seemed to be a familiarity in the face, figure and walk that was unaccountable to him in the circumstances, and he gazed upon the approaching man with intent interest and puzzled scrutiny.

The latter when he had approached within a

yard or two smiled in recognition, extended his hand, and in genial familiarity said: "Good morning, Mr. Langworth; good morning, my stanch preserver and friend. I sincerely hope that the happenings of last night have not incapacitated you to any great extent." The familiar, genial manner grew in earnestness and deference as he held the hand of the one addressed in a long firm clasp, gazed into his eyes and proceeded: "You don't look bad, however, so I take it that you are feeling tolerably well, and I wish to again extend my heartfelt gratitude to you for the great service you rendered me. And tell you once more," he added, with emphasis of voice and head after a brief emotional pause, "that if I can repay it, or partly do so in some manner, I will do so. I shall not forget!" At the concluding words he shook his head impressively and pressed the other's hand in a firm, strong clasp before relinquishing it.

John Langworth shook his head deprecatingly. "It was no more than any man would do for another," he rejoined in some modest confusion, "if it were in his power. And your gratitude repays me sufficiently without further recompense; so say no more about it.'

"I learned your name just now, Mr. Langworth, from the hotel man," explained the other after a brief pause, eying his companion with a keen, scrutinizing gaze. "And my own name, Mr. Langworth, if you heard it, I think," he went on with a smile, "would sound familiar to you. You know this world is not such a big place after all, if I may be pardoned for using a somewhat hackneyed phrase. It's a small, narrow place in some cases."

He paused and they both stood eying each other,

the one countenance moved to smiles and confidence, the other to puzzled perplexity.

The perplexed man dropped his eyes from the confronting countenance and bent them on the floor in deep thought for a few moments. Then in an instant, as he recalled the information of his companion the previous night, that he had graduated from a medical college and practiced medicine for some years, a light dawned on his puzzled mind and he looked upon the countenance smilingly confronting him and recognized the man though the countenance and form had changed much.

"Hilkley Tweedwell!" he gasped as he took the hand again extended and held it in bewilderment.

"The same!" was the hearty rejoinder. "You know, Langworth," he added scrutinizing the one addressed, whose bewilderment gradually abated, "I thought I recognized you last night. There was something about your voice that sounded familiar, though your face seems to have changed considerably."

Then they eyed each other in silence for a few moments in a long hand-clasp, each searching critically for the changes and marks of Time upon the other's countenance that would be of guidance in betraying progress or retrogression indicative of one's standing in the world.

John Langworth in the examination discerned something about the other's general appearance and manner—the general expression of countenance, the voice and the shifty, fishy-looking eye—that was not so reassuring and exactly what he was inclined to expect from a successful practitioner of medicine of years standing, such as the other had always claimed he would soon become.

"The same, my old friend," repeated Hilkley

Tweedwell with a smile. "The same, though somewhat more worn," he added somewhat apologetically as if divining the other's thoughts. "But I am not looking at my best to-day, as you must know," he went on assuringly.

"My garments as well as my countenance looks considerably seedy. I had to borrow a coat for the time being to make myself look somewhat presentable." There was an apparent light flippancy about his utterance when not assuming a deportment of gravity that was scarcely pleasing to the listener.

"And how have you and the world been getting along?" he asked in the same manner; "you and your world since you dropped out of sight from mine and Caldwell Winngath's ken? But how strange it is how you and I have met after all those years; and strange, too, you might have gone away without my meeting you again, both ignorant of a knowledge of who the other was."

John Langworth agreed to this; then he answered the other's query.

"I have knocked around from Bismarck to Helena at the occupations of cowboy, farmer, miner and cattle raiser," was his brief rejoinder," and I find myself older and a little better off; that is all."

Then he added: "How is Caldwell Winngath? Do you know?"

A discernible shade passed over the countenance of Hilkley Tweedwell at this query.

"I think I do," was his answer in somewhat constrained tones. "I heard about him, if not from him, at least, some time past—two or three years ago—from a fellow that was at the college and graduated a year before him, and before you came. He said that he saw him in Chicago, and he was

settled with a fine practice, married and doing well in a better class section of the city. Some fellows have great luck!"

The last remark brought about a meditative mood, and while he indulged this a silence reigned for a few seconds unbroken by either.

Hilkley Tweedwell was the first to break the silence. "But, damn it all, Langworth!" he exclaimed vehemently with a savage grimace, "I've had as good a practice as anybody, and I could have kept it if I had had a fair show, and a fair chance. But I never had a chance; there was always something happening. No, by thunder! I never had a chance," he went on with vehemence; "I never had a show! If I'd had a chance, Langworth, I'd soon been as I told you I'd be, the head of a great medical college in my native state of Iowa, or the holder of a great private and influential practice there." He mused for a time in silence at this with his eyes bent upon the floor; then he turned to his companion suddenly and asked with a scrutinizing look:

"Are you married, Langworth?"

The one addressed shook his head.

"That's where you've been wise," was the quick reply. "Once I didn't think there was much in your head, but now I see you could have given me points on one matter."

John Langworth did not reply to this rather dubious flattery, and the other proceeded:

"That's where I'd been wise, too," he said as he eyed his companion keenly through half-closed lids, "if I'd done the same as you. But I didn't. I got married; that's what broke me." He shook his head silently at this for a time, crossed his arms dejectedly over his breast and proceeded:

"I was building up a fine practice in Des Moines —tony, amongst the tip-top people in the place— when I got married. My wife had some money, not a great deal; but she acted as if she owned all the money in the world, and me, too, body and soul, as if I had no rights of my own. Her people were a lot of upstart prigs that caused me lots of trouble; some nobodies who thought they were the whole thing because they had made some money somehow. I hadn't a dog's life with her nor a dog's chance," he went on; his tone and look bespeaking much bitterness. "I'd been much better off if I'd married a woman with no money. She'd have studied my desires, likely, looked up to me; aided me in my ambitions, not thwarted me; bowed to my superior judgment. But, damn it all! she did everything to thwart me. She's been my evil genius for years, the one that has continually worked to my undoing, and ruination. Why, she's actually gone to the houses of well-to-do people—lady patients of mine —and made scenes because she got jealous and mad at me at hearing some stories. What do you think of that, Langworth?"

The only reply vouchsafed this was a nod.

"Women, you know, will see qualities they like in a man and nothing will stop them," he went on in a changed complacent manner, as if moved agreeably at this latter recalling. "They'll take a fancy to him, and if they throw themselves at him, what is he going to do? You, Langworth, have knocked about frontier towns and mining camps, and know that men are far from saints, though you were once rather prudish yourself." He looked at his companion for a reply but the latter simply nodded. "You know men will be men," he added, and received but a complacent non-committal look.

"Well, to cut the matter short," he hurriedly proceeded, "people gossiped about matters—made a great deal out of little; my wife did the same and raised a big rumpus several times, and finally ruined my practice in Des Moines. I got out and went to Kansas City, taking my wife with me to make a fresh start but her meddling in matters, her extravagance, and a few unlucky cases in my practice, broke me up again. After a year, seeing I was retrograding, in my disappointment and continual bad luck I threw up the game in that town, left my wife and started for Helena to begin life anew there. But you know, Langworth, they have little use for doctors in those mining towns, where most of the people are lusty and strong, and I gave up the game there just now when I found out that I could not make a living, after some patient trying.

"I am returning East, I don't know where. The fact is I don't care!" As he shook his head with pronounced emphasis at these concluding words, and came to a pause with knitted brows and compressed jaws, there was now no evidence of any of his recent agreeably moved manner, which possessed him while narrating the moral weaknesses of the opposite sex in their dealings with him. All about his manner and looks bespoke dejection, gloom and despair. Then in his bitterness and despair he cried aloud as he shook his head and his clenched fist: "Yes, that woman started all my ill-luck; she's been my evil genius; my undoing. I never had a chance with her; never a dog's chance! I'm afraid if I should go back to her, where she is, she'll break me altogether this time."

After this utterance he lapsed into dejected silence again, looking upon the floor with knitted brows.

John Langworth refrained from commenting on the unfolding of his companion. But. though he was silent on the matter, his mind was far from inactive drawing his own conclusions of the culpability of his companion's failures. He had reached that age of wisdom when he knew on what subjects to be silent and unmeddling, and he realized this was one. But he had not reached that stage of pharisaical reticence when one refrains from bestowing encouragement on another, even if there is good evidence that it is undeserved, and in an encouraging tone he said:

"I wouldn't let adverse happenings and circumstances crush me; I'd fight the game out manfully, properly, to the end. You're a young man, not reached you're prime yet, and ought to have plenty fighting spirit left. Circumstances may victimize one for a time, as they often do, but they cannot do it all the time. Fight against it, man! Fight against it!" He clapped the other encouragingly on the shoulder with his hand as he spoke.

Hilkley Tweedwell was inclined to be morose and obdurate; but after a few moments of silence he looked up and said: "It is easy for a man to be optimistic when everything is going well with him; and that's how you'll find things going with ninety-nine out of every hundred optimists. But when a fellow is like me," he shook his head with vehemence when he paused, "down, down, damned low down in his luck, it is hard to be optimistic!

'Why," he went on, after a brief pause, "I was never in such a damned fix as this before in my life. Why, I haven't a dollar in my possession since the accident that cleaned me out; not even a coat to my back, for I borrowed this one."

"But you have your life and health and strength,"

encouraged the other; and he drew forth from his pocket a considerable roll of bills. He counted out a hundred dollars and handed them to his companion as he remarked: "This will help you along for the time being, and you may strike luck soon."

The recipient took them without protest; was loud in his expressions of gratitude, and his intentions of paying them back when opportunity offered.

The two left the place together the following day; the one bound for his native state of Iowa; the other into the neighboring state where they parted.

When John Langworth had completed his business matters, he journeyed further East visiting friends till he reached Bismarck.

CHAPTER IV.

As John Langworth's vacation was drawing to a close and he was turning his thoughts to the life he had followed so long, and to which he had intended soon to return, a desire came upon him to see some of the life he had forsaken in the past, that of the great cities, the life of which he had been a stranger so many years, and once had no desire to renew after his brief experience of it in the great metropolis of the East. But now it seemed to him that he was missing much of what was going on in the world, and he had a desire to see some of this if but for a brief period. The desire grew stronger as the thought continued to possess him. He argued with himself that the change would do him good; that he was his own master with no binding ties of anyone depending upon him; that he had sufficient money for all his needs. Finally he consented to indulge his desire.

When he thought of what place to seek where he could see most of the life to which he had been a stranger so many years all his thoughts turned to Chicago, the great city of the Middle West, of which he had gotten a glimpse as he passed through it on his westward journey a decade ago. Then as some cattlemen, with whom he had formed an acquaintance, were leaving in a few days for that place, he decided to accompany them.

When John Langworth found himself amid all the transient sights of the Middle West metropolis it seemed like a new world opened up to him. For days he could not see enough of it, and he wan-

dered about from one place to another amid the great bewildering crowds of humanity, past the huge business structures with one companion or another, or by himself as if his desire for seeing would never be satiated. There seemed to be the same unceasing fascination in the bewildering countless glittering lights at night and the densely packed throngs by day; in the mad rush of street cars and numerous vehicles of all descriptions; in the hurrying pedestrians, men, women and children, hastening in all directions, to business, to work, to pleasure; and it would be hard to tell where, but always apparently hurrying. He paused occasionally in wonderment and curiosity to watch it all. He had been told and read that here money was the great goal, the loadstone that drew them on in one mad rush whether to business, to work, or to pleasure, it was first and foremost in their minds the goal for them all, young or old, rich or poor, the god that was worshiped before any other god with unabating, undying zeal. Now as he watched he was inclined to believe this.

Finally, when he began to get accustomed to it all, after a week or two, it began to pall upon him; the novelty wore off and he sought the quietude of the public parks to rest and muse. One day as he sat alone in one of these places reflecting his thoughts reverted to the two companions of his college days in New York, and especially to Caldwell Winngath, who he was told by the other was a successful practitioner in this very city, and he felt a desire impelled by curiosity to look him up. Soon after this desire possessed him he sought a nearby drug store, looked up a City Directory and located the name and address he sought. Then inquiring in what direction the location was he bent his steps

to a street car, boarded the latter and soon found himself close to the place of his quest which proved to be a quiet, superior residential district of the South Side near the Lake.

A few steps brought him to a modest two-storey dwelling, with ample porch in front, sitting back from the avenue a few feet, surrounded on three sides visible by a plot of garden containing a grassy lawn, flower beds and flowers in bloom, where his eyes caught the name "Doctor Winngath" on a sign below one of the confronting windows. In a few seconds he had opened the garden gate, crossed the intervening space between it and the house and stood on the porch ringing the door bell. Here he had a few seconds to take observations before his ring was answered, and in doing so he fell into a reflective mood:

"Winngath's a lucky fellow," he thought as he glanced around, "and he certainly has good taste and a liking for genuine comfort."

The porch where he stood was well overgrown with creeping vines through which he looked at the garden beyond, and the flowers in bloom from which came a faint sweet odor adding to the dreaminess of his mood. By his side stood a rocking chair with a magazine lying upon it, indicating that it had been occupied recently by someone. As he continued to gaze at the pleasant surroundings a loneliness stole upon him, and he felt more alone in the world than he had felt for a long time. And with this came a feeling of his own barrenness or littleness of achievement, and it seemed his utter uselessness in the world, and a sadness grew upon him. This mood was terminated abruptly, however, and he was brought to himself by the sudden opening of the door, and by the inquiring look of a fe-

male, who was evidently a maid servant, whose form confronted him.

He inquired if the doctor was at home, and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, and an invitation to step inside, he entered and was conducted through the hall into the reception room, which was the front parlor, and looked out upon the garden from two windows in front and one on the side. Here he was told to sit down; that the doctor would see him in a minute or two; then the maid withdrew.

For a few minutes John Langworth sat conjuring up visions of how his once companion would look after all these years, if he would recognize his visitor at first, and in what manner he would greet such an acquaintance of bygone days. Surrounding him was much evidence of comfort, culture and affluence, though everything seemed to be more for comfort and convenience than show. The floor was covered by a rich carpet, the general furniture was heavy and of fine make and material, the bric-a-brac and pictures showed good taste.

Through partly open folding doors dividing the apartment from another could be descried in the gloom of the shaded windows a huge piano, bookcases and other evidence of comfort, culture and ease. Through the partly open and partly screened windows near which he sat came the fragrant air from without and some faint beams of the early afternoon sun, that was creeping around to the west of the house, were penetrating the curtains mildly tempering the atmosphere and showing objects plainly in the room.

He was deep in the before-mentioned occupation when he heard the rustle of a dress, and looking up in the direction whence the sound came, which was

through the partly open folding doors separating the other apartment, he caught sight of a female figure and face within a few feet of him and about the center of the room.

The figure was draped in black, the clothes well fitting to the form, which was slightly above the medium heighth and well proportioned. The face beneath a halo of dark hair, was full, pale and thoughtful, the features regular, almost classic in contour, the eyes large, dark and liquid with the placid countenance seemingly bespeaking a calm steadfast nature. She appeared a woman of about thirty years of age. Her eyes were bent upon the visitor with a look of puzzled scrutiny as he looked up and caught their expression.

John Langworth now, after two or three weeks of city life, well groomed and dressed, with clean shaven face less bronzed showed little evidence of the rough frontier life he had been leading so long.

The lady bowed as she entered the room.

The visitor rose and bowed with some confusion, his eyes for the instant rivetted upon the woman, drinking in fully her whole appearance, moved to some admiration by the vision of beauty, though he was far from what is generally understood as a lady's man.

"Good morning," the lady murmured quietly as she came to a stand confronting the visitor a few feet from him her eyes regarding him with the same look of puzzled scrutiny.

"I believe you desired to see me."

The man had let his eyes drop modestly to the carpet under the woman's gaze. Now he raised them confusedly to hers, almost too astonished to formulate a reply.

"I—I desired to see the doctor—Dr. Winngath," he stammered in much confusion.

The lady bowed again. "I am Dr. Winngath," she replied in the same quiet tones and calm serenity of countenance, her dark orbs bent upon him in a piercing gaze as if reading him through and through.

This was most surprising information indeed, and the visitor showed his astonishment in a prolonged puzzled gaze at the imparter of it.

"But—but it was not a lady I came to see," he stammered at last. "It was Dr. — Dr. Caldwell Winngath, an old friend of mine I had not seen for years—an old college companion. We were companions at the same college and the same boarding house. I learned recently from an acquaintance I met in the West that he was located somewhere in Chicago, and I being on a visit to the city, decided to look him up."

The lady listened to this information in the same placid manner, the same immovable countenance, the same intentness of gaze bent upon the visitor as if not only laying bare the innermost recesses of his mind, but analyzing deep down into the very depth of his soul. Even at the conclusion of the unfolding she showed no evidence of a desire to break in upon the quietude that reigned—strained quietude for the man, deep, reflective, analytic for the woman. Finally, as they stood gazing at each other, the woman's eyes still bent immovably upon the countenace of the man, the latter perplexedly meeting the gaze as he moved uneasily upon his feet, and the moments sped, one after the other, told off by the ticking of a gilt clock on the mantle over the open fireplace, the notes sounding clear and

distinct to both above all distant sounds, the woman spoke without changing her manner or posture.

"You—you wish to see Dr. Caldwell Winngath," she said in low, hesitating accents. "You will never be able to see him, at least not in this life; he has gone the road whence no one ever returns."

"Dead," said the man in tones scarcely above a whisper, after a brief moment's silence, hardly daring to utter the forbidding word for fear of the feelings of his companion, conscoius now of the latter's relationship to the departed, his gaze melting in sympathy for the woman.

The latter inclined her head slightly.

"Yes, dead," she said, her voice scarcely audible, her lips hardly moving. "He died two years ago."

John Langworth did not utter any reply. His sympathetic steadfast gaze moved from the other's countenance to the window near where he stood and he looked out at the bright spring sunshine, the green grass and the early varied colored vernal flowers confronting him from the beds in the little lawn before the house bespeaking so much life and beauty, and it seemed difficult to realize that death—death in all its forbiddingness—had hovered near.

"I am sorry," he said in subdued tones as he turned from the scene of beauty without and his gaze lighted on the woman standing before him. "Sorry, also, very sorry, indeed, that I did not know, and I should have awakened—recalled—sad memories to you, and caused you pain, which I would have saved you if I could."

The other inclined her head in reply, and a deep thoughtful silence followed during which the gaze of both turned to the window and the scene with-

out. After a silence of a minute or so the woman turned her gaze within upon the man.

"I came from the East as well as my husband," she explained, now showing some animation and desire to talk. "We left there shortly after my husband graduated. He built up a good practice here, and we got along well together. No children, however, came, and having considerable unoccupied time on my hands, and thinking to aid my husband, to be more of a companion to him, I turned my attention to his medical books, studying them unceasingly until I acquired a good knowledge of medicine and could talk with him on most subjects concerning it. Finally, as years passed on, I decided to take a regular course in a medical college, and did so, graduating and becoming a full licensed practitioner. But I did not practice to any extent till after his death. That is how I happened to choose this calling and how you find I am following it now."

The visitor then gave a brief outline of his life since he left the East and abandoned the study of the profession he had taken up. The woman listened to this attentively. Then, as a rather lengthy thoughtful quiet reigned unbroken by either he signified his intention of going, and prepared to take his leave.

The lady showed him to the door, opened the door graciously for him, extended her hand at parting with a quiet good-bye and a long, steadfast look, but did not ask him to call again.

CHAPTER V.

VISIONS of the placid countenance and the dark, thoughtful eyes haunted John Langworth as he bent his steps toward the centre of the city after the late interview, for he walked, preferring so doing to riding, in the mood in which he found himself. He was deeply reflective of the woman he had just met who had been the wife of the once companion of his student days. She was so entirely different to that which he would have looked for and expected in a woman who had chosen the practice of medicine for a profession. He had an idea that all, or most of such, were either masculine, austere, old or forbidding in some manner. He wondered how deeply she had loved her late husband, for it seemed impossible that a woman of her physical beauty, apparent depth of character, virtue and mental attainments could marry a man without a deep and sincere passion, and how deeply she cherished his memory now. That she possessed all these attainments and virtues he hardly doubted from what he had seen of her, for he had generally found himself a true judge of character, and when he recalled the standard of such attainments in the late Caldwell Winngath, who though possessing some good qualities and was generally considered a good fellow and boon companion, nevertheless had much in his makeup of the grosser kind, he was considerably puzzled. He had not seen enough of the civilization of the eastern section of the country to know that it is not uncommon for mental superiority and physical beauty to be

united to vulgarity and grossness for the sake of a home or the bountiful bestowal of worldly goods.

He could recall the home in every minute detail, as he walked along, bespeaking refinement and good taste; the garden with flower beds surrounding the house and the stretch of verdant grass; the front parlor from the windows of which he had gazed upon the vernal bloom without, and the few choice paintings and pictures upon the walls of that apartment; the vases with cut flowers upon the mantel at each side, the gilt clock, the heavy circular table upon which rested volumes and magazines of the better class, and other furniture bespeaking comfort and ease; the adjoining inner parlor with its vista of bookcases and piano, through the open connecting doors of which he had caught the first glimpse of the mistress of the house as she entered his presence. Of all these surroundings he thought, but his reflections were chiefly of the being who was amid them; they were but a background to her presence.

She remained uppermost in his mind despite all his efforts to banish her therefrom. This he tried to do when evening arrived and he had reached the hotel at which he was residing. He believed he had given her enough of thought and it was time to think of something else. But all his efforts to do so were unavailing for she still continued persistently to occupy his mind. It all seemed very strange to him, as he had never before given so much thought to any one woman. There had been rare occasions, however, when he had been attracted to the manner and appearance of members of the opposite sex, but in these cases the object of attraction had soon been banished voluntarily from his mind.

He reasoned with himself that this would be the result in this instance the following day. But when that day arrived, and even the next to that, his thoughts were only a little less occupied with the object of attraction. He then began to reason why it should be so. He hardly thought he was in love with her. He merely believed it was a deeply-rooted feeling of interest and friendship that had been awakened in him for this evidently intellectual woman he had met in such strange circumstances.

Besides, he told himself that he knew it could be nothing more, for he had all along wondered how men could marry widows or divorced women who seemed much alike to him, inasmuch that they had been the property of other men, and it had always seemed to his view like wearing other men's cast-off garments and the clothes of the dead to marry them, and repugnant to his taste.

Thus he mused and reasoned as one day gave way to another, and the time he had elected for his departure for the West drew near. Then as the days continued to pass he felt a growing over-mastering desire to see the woman again. But how to achieve this desire was a matter that puzzled him very much. She had not asked him to call and he believed it looked somewhat presumptuous to do so in the circumstances. Nevertheless, as he reflected on the matter of her not inviting him to call he liked her the better for her not doing so. He told himself that he was a mere stranger to her and if she had asked him to call there was no reason why she should not do the same to other men whom she met casually. He racked his brain in an effort at devising some plausible excuse for his calling on her without his action seeming forward or open to offence. One idea after another entered

his head only to be abandoned after some reflection, and in the man's modest self-consciousness his efforts were in vain. Then finally he thought the best plan of all and the most manly would be to call boldly on her with the simple statement that he felt desirous of seeing her again and thought he would call.

The more he thought of this plan the more it appealed to him and he decided to put it into execution the following afternoon. That afternoon, when it arrived found him there at the dwelling, as he had planned, ringing the door-bell and speculating with some misgiving as he did so on the nature of his coming reception.

It was nearly two weeks since his previous visit and he wondered if he had dropped entirely out of the woman's mind in that time, and if she would be surprised, pleased or annoyed at this renewal of acquaintanceship. His mental speculation was soon ended, however, by the opening of the door, and in a little surprise and confusion he found himself confronted by the lady herself. As he removed his hat with a bow she bowed also, and extended her hand graciously.

"How do you do, Mr. Langworth?" she asked in quiet pleasing tones that were entirely reassuring to him. He replied fittingly. Then she stood aside and held the door invitingly for him to enter, closed it after him and led the way into the front reception room where she invited him to be seated and seated herself.

"In calling," said the visitor apologetically, with some nervousness and embarrassment as he seated himself and fumbled his hat in his hand, "as I felt I would like to do, to meet you again before I left

for the West, I was in some doubts as to whether I might not be trespassing on your valuable time, knowing that doctors' time is not only generally valuable but often in great demand."

The lady nodded gravely to this explanation. Then as she was about to reply a faint little smile illumed her countenance for an instant as she keenly regarded the visitor.

"Some doctors," she rejoined quietly with a nod. "Yes," she went on with the same little smile lighting up her eyes and features, and this time there seemed to be a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, "some doctors' time is valuable, and in great demand, but not all."

It was the first time he had seen her smile, and it was so genuine and spontaneous as to be infectious and he found himself irresistibly joining in it.

Then after a brief pause she proceeded in her previous grave manner and said: "However, I have as much practice myself as I desire. I prefer some time to myself. This I generally get; so I can spare some occasionally for a little social and friendly intercourse and matters of my household. You know that practitioners of my sex are not generally so much in demand as the other sex, and their time is not generally so valuable."

The visitor nodded agreeingly with a look of meaning import.

"Yes, they are probably not so much in demand generally as some of the men practitioners," was his reflective reply. "But there are a great many exceptions," he went on with emphasis and a smile, "wherein this rule does not apply, I should judge, from observations. Why, I have known some of these latter practitioners, who, if they had nothing to depend upon for their next week's food or their

next month's living but their fees from their cases who'd have gone very hungry not only the next week, but the next month and the next year, and their digestion and assimilation would have been in a generally deplorable condition; in fact, in as bad a condition as the digestion and assimilation of some of their patients after taking their prescribed concoctions for a time."

The lady smiled at this, moved to genuine humor. "Yes, it is sad to think of," she said with a shake of the head, "to think of both such cases—the doctor and the patient."

All the reserve and restraint of the previous visit seemed now to have disappeared, giving place to genuine frankness.

Then they talked of the weather, which was bright and genial. The visitor in praising it laid his hat aside, rose and looked out the window at the bright sunshine, where his admiration turned to the vista of green grass and varied-colored spring flowers confronting him, and he spoke of their beauty and the hostess joined him and followed his gaze and also spoke of the beauty of the flowers.

Then they seated themselves again and she asked him many questions about his life on the frontier and the plains, and why he had abandoned the study of medicine for that life. He could frankly answer all questions about the former, but in answering the latter he used more reserve. He possessed a fund not only of good entertaining talk and anecdotes, but of good judgment, and did not make his stay too long, and this time when he said good-bye at departure he received an invitation from the hostess to call again.

As he wended his way to his abode he told himself that he most assuredly would call again, and before long, for the visit had been very pleasant and entertaining indeed to him.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN LANGWORTH allowed a week at least to pass before he thought it wise to pay another visit to the home and presence he had found so entertaining. During that week a considerable change had come over him. He had actually been considering seriously whether or not he would return to the West. An idea had entered his mind of returning to the study of the profession he had abandoned so abruptly a decade past. No longer it seemed to him the brutalizing occupation it had once seemed. He must have been mistaken in his conception of its influence, he argued with himself, for no greater refutation of such an idea could he find than in the refined, cultured gentle being whom he had come to know recently who followed that occupation. However, he had not decided on what course he would follow; he felt that a few days would decide him.

When he called the next time he was conducted within to the now familiar reception room by the maid, who told him that her mistress would see him in a few minutes.

When the hostess entered the visitor thought that he had not seen her on either previous visit looking so charming as now. She wore a small bunch of pink carnations in her breast, there was a sparkle in her eye and a color in her cheek that had hitherto been absent, and he believed she was pleased with him for coming.

She greeted him with a gracious bow, pleasant

smile and gentle hand clasp as he rose at her entrance.

"I am pleased to see you, Mr. Langworth," she said, with unaffected simplicity. "This beautiful spring weather we have been having still lasts I am glad. Nature is indeed very kind."

The visitor expressed his gratitude at her remarks concerning himself, and also his gladness at the continuation of the fine weather.

Then they seated themselves and talked on matters in general but of no consequence to themselves. After they had exhausted these topics and a silence had reigned for a few moments she turned to him and with more interest said:

"Mr. Langworth, I am going to an entertainment to-night—an entertainment among a few friends. It is given by the Author's Club, an auxiliary organization of the church I attend, and this is the meeting night. It is a literary club and we meet once a week at members' residences to study the authors' and poets' works; to debate on them, to read and recite from them. To-night it is Browning, next week it will be Shakespeare, and last week it was Mr. Wordloft the author."

She unfolded this information with a rapidity and an easy flow of words which along with the information imparted was truly amazing to the visitor and he could not conceal the surprise he felt. Even after she had concluded he gazed at her in some bewilderment.

"And are you really—really a member of a club of authors—writers—and study Browning and Wordloft?" he gasped feeling somewhat small.

The woman gazed at him in silence for a moment or two, then her eyes began to smile and her lips, and she burst into an irrepressible smile and

low, musical ripple of laughter. At the first sound of her voice in laughter upon his ears its music dispelled immediately the bewildered awe in which he was regarding her and her supposed superiority in learning.

"Authors, writers!" she repeated, still moved to irrepressible smiles. "Why, no! No, I do not know of one of us that is an author or a writer in the sense you mean. I never wrote a line myself in that manner. I know of none of us unless it is Mr. Windthrope, the president of the club, who is assistant editor of the 'Sentinel and Star.' I hardly think, however, that he could be called an author though he writes some articles, I know, for the Sunday edition. His writings are chiefly upon society matters and doings, of which he seems to be considerable of an authority, especially South-side society, and can be seen on the page of the Sunday paper devoted to such matters under the heading, 'Society Notes.'

"Rexton is his *nom de plume,* and he is rather proud of it as well as of his literary productions, though they are rather meager as his time is taken up at his employment chiefly in assisting in the management of the paper. However, he not only thinks himself a writer of some power and importance, but a power in society as well, of which latter he aspires to be. Some say his aspirations in this line are autocratic and dictatorial. He already claims to be an authority on the matter of society standing, and the importance of who is who. If you get the Sunday 'Sentinel and Star,' you may see his literary productions. But you may have a chance to judge his flowery style at the coming club meeting, as he occasionally reads his effusions there, if they concern the doings of the organization, which is the

case once in a while. His style is very flowery and elaborate, and he doubtless thinks himself an important literary personage and capable of a great deal in that line."

This criticism of another with its mild trace of cynicism that was scarcely discernible, without the least particle of acridity, seemed so very human and natural and it banished any vestige of awe and reserve remaining in the visitor that the laughter had failed in doing.

"And are there many of these extremely superior persons members of the Authors' Club?" he asked placidly with a little trace of cynicism.

"I should think there would be," he went on in the same manner, "if they can devote their time to Wordloft. I picked up a novel of his a year or two ago, and began to read it. I had never before read any of his works, never discussed him, and had not the remotest idea of his style to form any preconceived notion about him, though his name as an author as well as the title of this particular book was not unfamiliar to me.

"Well, I read two or three chapters at the first sitting and rose at the conclusion with a rather dazed notion of what I had been reading and a considerable headache. I really did not appreciate the story. I was inclined, however, to attribute this lack of appreciation to not feeling well; and I did not feel well, I can assure you, at the conclusion of the reading. I tried it the following day when I was in a very pleasant mood, but the pleasant mood did not last long when I perused that book. I got so exasperated before I had proceeded far that I rose in wrath and flung it with much force at the wall of the room facing me. And, really," he added with much assurance in his look and voice, "I am

usually a very even-tempered mortal. Well," he resumed in his previous manner, "somebody picked up the book and put it on the stand in my room and a few days afterward when I caught sight of it I felt some remorse for my previous action and began to think I had been unfair. A desire to give it what I considered a fair trial possessed me and I settled myself comfortably to the task. I could not dispel somehow the notion that it was a task I was undertaking, though I tried to disabuse my mind of that idea and make myself think that the lack of former appreciation lay with me. Well, I made a lengthy struggle this time, but a struggle that was unavailing. It finished with my wrath inflamed to such an extent that I rose and with much force flung the book out the open second-storey window of my room, and that was the beginning and the end of Wordloft with me. I could never again induce myself to look at any of his works. I cannot see that the running the risk of paralysis of the brain would be repaid by what I could possibly learn by reading any of his novels." His manner bespoke a semi-seriousness at this.

The hostess who had been an amused and attentive listener, occasionally breaking into smiles at the narration, now burst into laughter at its conclusion.

"It's as well," she said, after she had eyed him in amused silence for a few moments, "that we discussed Wordloft last week, and are through with him for a time, as I am going to invite you to attend our meeting next week and meet the club which meets right here when the subject will be the immortal bard Shakespeare."

The visitor was profuse in his thanks for the honor the invitation conferred upon him and the

pleasure his attendance would afford him; but in his mind he was not so sure of the latter. He felt that it would be infinitely more pleasurable to meet the one member of the club that he knew than the whole body.

The woman seemed to read his thoughts as she eyed him closely with a calm, reflective gaze.

"Why, Mr. Langworth," she said assuringly, "we are not a formidable body of people at all. You will find that out when you meet us; we're far from that, indeed. We are only ordinary mortals—mortals with ordinary mortals' common failings—and it is one of the commonest human failings to assume a superiority we do not possess. It inflates us to make believe we understand that which is not understandable by the common mind, raises us so much in our estimation above the common herd that in our own little minds and stupendous vanity we begin to really think and believe that we are really so much their superior." From his countenance her deeply reflective gaze wandered afar.

"I do not know whether the wise man of the Bible was right or not," she went on reflectively after a pause, "when he said that all men are liars. But I think he would have been right if he had said that all mankind were hypocrites, more or less so. At least I think the preponderant majority are," she added with a look at her companion. It was evident that she added the latter explanation to her statement out of regard for his feelings. "So don't take us too seriously, Mr. Langworth," she went on in her previous reflective mood, "or the world, for that matter. Take our little failings and vanities as a matter of course, and do not look for perfection from those you meet, for if you do you might as well go and shut yourself up alone from

your fellows. I tell you all this," she proceeded with a close, scrutinizing look at her companion, "because you may meet, at this coming gathering, those whose little and big failings are so apparent. They seemed so apparent to me at first that I seriously wondered whether it was worth the while bothering about such people at all—seeking their society. But as we are all more or less gregariously inclined, and the company of our fellows is a necessity to some extent, I reconsidered the idea of leaving them entirely alone. So if you see our little make-believes and hypocrisies, or our big make-believes and hypocrisies, for even much of our religion is a sham, try and look upon these as small hypocrisies and failings. Remember we are all more or less make-believes and shams and very human and far from perfection."

This was all delivered with deep earnestness and sincerity and the look like the tone of voice, placid and mild. John Langworth laughed. He had followed her closely with deep earnestness.

"I had an idea that those who could discover the intricacies of Wordloft and Browning were just a little more than human," he said with some banter.

The hostess shook her head musingly.

"If you only knew all our little failings, petty mean failings, supposed Christians and all as we are, you would soon be undeceived in your estimate of us, and realize how human we all are." There was a touch of sadness in the tone of voice for an instant, and a look of ineffable suffering, almost anguish, in the far-off gaze that did not escape him, and his whole being was moved in sympathy for the woman, drawn to her irresistibly in one spontaneous impulse.

All his mood for banter had now vanished, leaving him gazing on her with a constrained steadfast look of sympathetic tenderness. In that look he seemed to fathom much that her words hid from him. He realized that her upward struggle socially had been far from free of pain, wounds and suffering.

"The spirit of Christ," he said quietly, "is not always dominant and manifest in those who gather in his name."

There was scorn in the woman's face at this and scorn in her voice when she spoke.

"The spirit of Christ," she said with some vehemence, "why, it is plain you have not mixed much among them; at least those belonging to a fashionable or half-fashionable church in a large city. Why, if it was manifest but a little, without being dominant, it would be all right. But it is almost an unknown quality. It is banished as they would banish Him if He came among them. Some people are prone to say that He would be crucified again if He came amid those in the church preaching His doctrine. The crucifying, however, would be in a more refined, subtle manner than heretofore; for He would find Himself among adepts at that latter method. Yes, adepts!" she concluded with an energetic shake of the head, and a look that was almost defiant.

She eyed him in silence for a moment or two and in that brief time the cloud passed from her countenance and it was all sunshine, as the shadow of a cloud will pass from the face of nature leaving it shining and radiant.

"I had no idea of entering into so lengthy and disagreeable theme," she said with a smile. "I must really be somewhat under the weather—the

weather that seems as if it is a little threatening and presaging a change."

She then spoke of more cheerful matters—the club and the very pleasant people connected with it and the entertainment of the next week to be held at her abode—and she seemed all sunshine.

The visitor then signified his intention of taking his departure. She did not press him to stay any longer, but stated that she would go immediately and make preparations for her own departure as she had several matters to attend to and the place of the meeting was some considerable distance away. He liked her better for this frankness, and when she extended her hand to him at the door, he held it in a rather long clasp before relinquishing it, which clasp she made no effort to disengage.

CHAPTER VII.

As half-past eight was the hour of the meeting of the Authors' Club, the time when it was customary to begin the programme of the evening, John Langworth let the time be within a few minutes of that before he called. He thought the plan of making his appearance there when all the members or nearly all of them were present the best, for it saved the trouble of individual introductions. Though not a shy man, nevertheless he entertained some dread of meeting all those people of assumed literary qualities, and, as he was inclined to believe, superiority in aspiration and deportment.

When the maid answered his ring and admitted him, the hostess met him in the hall with her customary gracious bow, smile and handclasp. Then she led him in the front reception room in view of the assembled gathering which comprised about thirty people of both sexes, ranging in ages from twenty to thirty-five at the most, the sexes about evenly divided.

The folding doors, separating the front and inner parlor, had been thrown wide open revealing all present as if in one apartment.

To John Langworth, accustomed to the western life of the frontier and the plains, it was a brilliant sight and gathering his eyes rested upon. The luminous lights of the two huge chandeliers shed a lustre over all, animate and inanimate—the pictures, bric-a-brac, the onyx and marble topped tables, the vases of cut flowers, some of them great bunches of American Beauty roses, the huge piano with its

glistening white keys and other pieces of furniture, and the animated beings sitting and standing about in groups, some of the fair sex showing considerable beauty of person.

The hostess introduced him with the explanation that he was an old friend of her late husband from the West. At the words of introduction all eyes were turned upon the stranger and the hostess and much speculation was awakened in their minds concerning him—his worldly position and social standing—about the first thoughts the most of them were likely to entertain concerning anyone. He bowed to the right and to the left of him, his eyes glancing over the assemblage as he did, and received in return a bow from all, some who were sitting slightly rising and inclining their heads in acknowledgement.

The meeting was about to come to order with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting by the secretary, and all seated themselves for the formality.

John Langworth was honored with a seat near the hostess, much to his satisfaction, for he felt considerably more at ease thereby. Besides, it was very pleasing for him to know that he had been so honored by the handsome hostess, for despite the fact that most of the women were younger there was none surpassed her in beauty. Indeed, it was doubtful if any equalled her in that respect.

The secretary, a sharp-featured keen-eyed dapper young man of about twenty-eight, produced a volume and began to read aloud therefrom. He went fully into the details of what had taken place at the previous gathering—the date of the meeting, the number of members present, the names of those who took part in the debates, readings and recita-

tions, the financial condition, with a list of dues collected and expenditures since made for volumes, etc. Then in conclusion he said:

"I forwarded the report to our honored president"—he directed a glance at the one named—"so that he could prepare in suitable literary form any part that is to be published. If he has done so will he submit the article to the club for the members to pass judgment and approval upon before its publication?

At the name "honored president" the one referred to rose to his feet, threw out his chest, rested the back of his hand in the hollow of his back, scanned those in the room with a quick, sweeping glance of self-assurance, gazed up at the ceiling for an instant and rested his eyes upon the carpet with a look of resigned patience till the speaker concluded.

He was thirty years old, straight, slim with light brown hair and lighter mustache, and would be called tall because he was slightly above the medium height. He had been an active worker in the church for a number of years, filling the position of librarian of the Sunday School, church usher and often leader of the young people's meetings.

When he had come to the church poor and obscure he had started in to ingratiate himself into the good esteem of the important personages of the church. Two of these in whom he found much favor were the pastor, and one of Chicago's prominent business plutocrats who held much stock in the "Sentinel and Star."

When he found favor with this latter personage, his rise to comfort and affluence was rapid and sure for a minor position was found for him on the newspaper of which his wealthy fellow church

member was the controlling stock holder, and then he was soon promoted to managing editor.

The secretary of the Authors' Club had been just as zealous in his church work, and just as assiduous in his efforts to win his way into the good graces of the influential of the church, but these latter efforts had proved a dismal failure and he occupied the same humble position behind the counter of a department store as he had done for years. What was the cause of this partiality would have been difficult to tell for one young man was just as gifted as the other with a flow of words, self-assurance and assiduity in all he did in conection with the church and otherwise. It was just an instance of that strange working of lives that we see evidence of quite often if we but look around. One will start out in the race with another with equal ability and equal efforts and one of the two seems to harvest all the rewards.

When the secretary concluded the president coughed lightly several times, and with a glance about him began:

"I have prepared the article for publication as our honored secretary asks," he said in quiet tones of confidence as he withdrew the paper from his pocket.

"It is entitled, 'A Night with Browning at the South-Side Authors' Club.'" Then he bent his gaze upon the paper and proceeded, his voice rising and falling in widely varied fluctuating intonations and emphasis as he progressed, his head and hand moving with accompanying gestures of precision and force, his eyes, at intervals, rising from the manuscript in sweeping glances that bespoke much assurance.

"The Authors' Club enjoyed a delightful night

with its favorite poet, Browning, last Tuesday," was his unfolding. "There was never a dull minute during the entire evening devoted to rendition of the matchless verse, debate and colloquy upon the same, and as the light of his sublime imagery shed its effulgence upon the conceptible intellects of those present diffusing its radiance as the mild vernal sun, aided by the gentle zephyrs of the South, diffuse, permeate and illume the morning haze, spreading its lustre and splendor thereon, all were moved to ecstactic raptures of Elysian bliss.

"As imagery after imagery, metaphor after metaphor and figure after figure unfolded their subtle depth and intricate beauty to the assemblage the adulation and praise to the imperishable genius of this wonderful being was unstinted, vociferous and continuous.

"It is the wish and desire of the Authors' Club," he went on, with a sweeping glance at those present, after a momentary pause, "that no doubt should exist in the public mind concerning their stand on the sometimes mooted question of whether the genius of the poet was of the highest and sublimest order. The club is one, the same and immovable on this. It would set him at the highest pinnacle of celestial altitudes among those few luminous stars that grace that coveted sphere and diffuse their effulgence upon this world, enriching it by their presence, ennobling our beautiful tongue and expanding our intellects. The Authors' Club makes this wide emphatic statement not only to the public of Chicago and the public of this broad and ample land, but to the public of the world and challenges contradiction.

"The club also wishes to state that it advocates a wider study of him with the object of a broader in-

tellectual national refining development of the mind. With the latter object in view, it would advocate in conclusion that the works of Browning be read and studied in all literary social gatherings."

The president stopped and gazed around expectantly with a look of confidence for the applause and the usual proposition for a vote of approval. He had scarcely done this, and the hand-clapping was just beginning to break forth, when the secretary sprang to his feet in an instant before the hands of many had signified any approval in applause, his action bringing the assemblage to an instantaneous hush.

All noting the eager tenseness stamped upon the sharp features of the latter withheld their applause, those who had broken into hand-clapping ceasing their manifestations, and those who were about to applaud remaining silent, and everybody looked for important developments. Nor were all these expectant ones mistaken in their anticipations for the next moment proved that these two intellects had come into collision.

It was no small matter when these two poised shields and crossed lances in the intellectual arena for they were both considered intellectual and erudite giants by the club and well matched.

"Before anybody proposes a vote of approval," said the secretary with slow, deliberative emphasis, his eyes gleaming with a look that bespoke much suppressed animation, "I wish to raise one objection. I wish also to say that I am no caviller, am not in the habit of raising captious objectious. I never raise objection unless there are good grounds and weighty matter for my doing so. This I will prove!"

He uttered the latter sentence with unusual em-

phasis. Then he swept a glance around at those present and rested his eyes upon the previous speaker with challenging defiance for an instant, and proceeded with added confidence:

"In this instance, however, I believe there are very weighty grounds for objecting, and I believe the club, or at least the majority of the members will sustain me in what I say after they hear me.

"Now, what I object to," he enunciated with great force, his eyes gleaming, his brows knitting, his hand clenching and with his arm executing a wide sweep about him, "is the use of the word all, in the closing clause wherein our honored president says: 'The Club would advocate that the works of Browning be read and studied in all literary social gatherings.'" In silence he swept another impressive glance of confidence about him.

"Now," he went on with mild confidence, his head shaking, his arm sweeping a slow, graceful swerve in front of him, "I would not for all the world advocate the vulgarizing of our beloved poet. And to do as that statement advocates would, I believe, be doing so. I would expurge the word, all, and substitute, the higher for it. Have it read: 'In the higher literary social gatherings.'" He paused, nodded his head energetically and looked around to note the effect of his words.

A considerable murmur of approval from the auditors greeted this with concurring nods and glances, and the hands that a few minutes previously had been shaping to break into applause for the advocacy and eloquence of the president, now burst into vigorous hand-clapping for the objector.

The latter, encouraged greatly by these manifestations, proceeded when they had abated.

"The time may come," he said with a complacent generous glance at the president, "when the works of our esteemed poet may be more widely read and studied by the generality of people—safely read in fact—without the fear of vulgarizing them, or subjecting them to misinterpretation. But that time, I fear, will not be in our time. Nevertheless, it may come in some other generation when the general mind and understandings have been deepened and widened intellectually by the slow process that is going on of widening and deepening from one generation to another till the general mind reaches that ideal state of receptivity that the few possess to-day. In the meantime, however, I think we ought to be somewhat conservative in our expectations of what we may look for from the many."

The speaker sank to his seat amid considerable applause that burst forth as he finished; applause from many who would have been ashamed to tell or recall what their grandfathers did for a livelihood. But some did not even know that much of so distant an ancestor as a grandsire.

As the hand-clapping died away the president arose and all eyes were turned expectantly to him for a vigorous defence of what he had advocated and what had been assailed so vigorously by the other. But the expectant gathering was doomed to disappointment.

The former realized at once that the overwhelming majority favored the other in his contention and wisely decided to coincide with hm. Besides, when he spoke there was considerable truth in his statement of his views upon the matter.

"Our esteemed secretary is right, I think, in his objections," he said with an air of placid candor,

"and I desire to voice my approval of his contention. If I had used more mature judgment, which I would have done if I had been more deliberate in preparing the article, I believe I would have expurged the words referred to myself, and substituted that which is advocated by our esteemed brother, or some similar phrase, for it fully meets with my views." There was applause at this, and the objection with the approval of the general article for publication, was sustained by the unanimous vote and the subject was dropped. This finished what was evidently considered the weighty matter of the evening, and preparations were made for the lighter to come.

Shakespeare's "As You Like It," considerably abridged, was then produced, being recited from copy by the president, the secretary and three of the ladies in turn each taking part of an act in sequence of number and rendering the story with connecting lucidity and interest to all.

The reciting of this was very pleasing and entertaining; but what was much more pleasing and entertaining was the novelty of the hostess seating herself at the piano and rendering mirthfully the page song from the last act "It Was a Lover and His Lass," her rich soprano voice warbling the words of the melody clearly and melodiously. This was so pleasing that an encore was insisted on. It was so very pleasing to John Langworth that the tuneful rhyme rang in his ears after the voice and music had ceased. Even when the refreshments were produced and served around by the hostess and the maids and conversation and discussion had become general upon the play rendered and other topics, the melody still haunted him. Even when later along with the others he took his departure

it still accompanied him homeward ringing in his ears. He even caught on his memory the concluding stanza of the refrain and he found his voice repeating the lines:

"And therefore take the present time,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino:
For love is crowned with the prime
In the springtime, the only pretty ring time;
When the birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet loves love the spring."

CHAPTER VIII.

THOUGHTS of the recent entertainment occupied John Langworth's attention very much for the next few days. Often did the simple lines of the melodious ditty sung by the hostess form themselves on his mind and he found his voice joining involuntarily in the refrain. And with this were ever visions of the woman herself, thoughtful, always dignified, ever ready and mindful of the wants and feelings of others, prepared to minister to anyone. The sight of her breaking into song had been much of a surprise to him; as great a surprise as it had been a pleasure. Its effect upon him had been not to minimize in one degree the respect he felt for her, but just to banish some little awe he had hitherto entertained for her somewhat stately calm dignity. She seemed to him now more womanly and lovable, and often was her placid countenance with the calm, thoughtful eyes before him.

He came to regard the whole entertainment as an exceedingly pleasurable experience and one to be remembered as such. He felt not at all critically disposed toward some of the people he had met there whose deportment had been of the kind to evoke criticism, and he was inclined to look upon the display of little vanities and inconsistencies of which he had been a witness as very human and of small concern. This manner of seeing things his reflective mind told him was undoubtedly due to the presence and influence of the being on whom his thoughts were so much centred. The deport-

ment of the others, with the general display of small human weaknesses, had been somewhat gratifying to him than otherwise insomuch that it had brought pleasurably to his notice the superiority of the woman he now began to regard as a very dear friend. This superiority was not only manifest in deportment, but it was in looks and intellectual attainments to many of those whose financial and social standing was of the best and whose opportunities for higher attainments were unsurpassed.

John Langworth did not have to tax his mind much the following few days in arriving at a decision of what he was to do in regard to his future, whether he was to return to the West and the life to which he had been accustomed so long, or whether he was to begin anew in another line of endeavor right where he now was, and change the whole current of his existence.

At the first reflection on the subject following the night of the entertainment he felt that his mind was made up and nothing would change it. The passing of each day strengthened the belief that this decision was the right one and nothing would alter it.

He would make his home in Chicago, begin immediately his early broken-off study of medicine with the object of graduating as a practitioner as soon as possible. That earliest possible time, he knew, would be two years from the present early summer season when the colleges were closing for the summer and the students returning to their homes to again seek the city and their studies in the coming fall, the time when he would begin his own regular course in an institution. In the meantime, however, he realized he could advance him-

self considerably in general study. Between that and a return to the West to settle up his affairs in that section, he realized that the summer would soon pass and the time arrive for his close application to the regular course of the institution.

It was now no half-hearted interest in the profession chosen for him by parents, who did not live long enough to understand his developing manhood inclinations, that possessed him. On the contrary, he felt impelled by much enthusiasm, and capable of achieving high things. Reading the accounts of the graduations of the season of the young men starting out in life even intensified his feeling for achievement.

It was with much interest that he sought the presence of the lady member of the profession he was choosing for himself to acquaint her with the intended change he was about to make in his life. She was engaged when he called, but the maid informed him that she would see him in a few minutes.

He fell in a deeply reflective mood as he reclined back in the ample folds of an easy chair in the familiar room gazing out the front shaded windows at the warm sun or at the different familiar objects in the room.

Most of his thoughts were of the woman he had called to see, but of a different nature than hitherto. The fact developed itself now on his mind that he had scarcely ever been wont to regard her as the once wife of Caldwell Winngath. To do so now, even when he brought the matter clear to his understanding that this had been the position she had filled, seemed somewhat difficult. She seemed so entirely different to all that he could recall of the

man she had chosen as her mate that the union seemed incongruous.

He now recalled that she had never spoken of her departed spouse since the first meeting, and even then very little, as little in fact as she could have spoken in the circumstances. Probably this might have been somewhat the cause of his difficulty in so regarding her as the once wife of his companion. He wondered how they had met and in what circumstances; whether it had been a long courtship or a brief infatuation; if a brief infatuation whether one-sided or mutual; whether the marriage had been a happy and a lovable one, or one of simply mutual toleration like what he believed the majority of marriages to be after a time.

He went on to analyze his own feeling for her as he had never done before, and what had moved him for her society as he had been moved. Was it love as understood as such in the feelings of a member of one sex for a closer alliance than friendship with a member of the opposite sex? Or was it that friendship of one intellectually inclined mind for the cultured intellectual mind of another, that might exist, whether the sexes were the same or opposite? He was inclined to think it was the latter, and after some more reflection he felt more convinced it was but not wholly so.

He had never had much faith in that which has been called platonic regard or affection between the sexes. In fact, he did not think that anybody of common sense had much faith in it. But in this case it was so different he thought. She was following the same profession he had chosen; she was about the same age as he, just past that early youth when minds were generally unstable, fanciful, whimsical and visionary, and, like himself, free

from all these many weaknesses and failings; she possessed a deeply analytic mind, sympathetic, refined and intuitive, and though he had not the vanity to lay claim to all these endowments himself, nevertheless, he realized there was much in common in their natures and temperaments.

Thus he went on analyzing and musing until his reflections were ended abruptly by the entrance of the being who had awakened them all. She greeted him in the usual manner, seated herself and they drifted into a few commonplace discussions. Then when the talk was lagging he thought of breaking to her the news of himself.

He was generally somewhat tardy in talking of himself when there was any other subject of some importance to discuss.

In this respect he was the antithesis of many who seemingly find nothing so important as themselves to talk about.

His early teaching, environments, discipline and inherited traits, all had something to do with this, for though an only child he was far from spoiled in his childhood and early youth as these products generally are.

"I am going to stay in Chicago," he said at last in his usual quiet tone of voice as his eyes rested intently on the other's countenance; "stay in Chicago, I hope, and give up the Western life and become the same as you, a medical practitioner; follow the study of the profession I abandoned years ago."

She did not reply, but eyed him in silence with an intense, deeply penetrating gaze for a few moments as if reading, or trying to read, his innermost thoughts. He thought from her looks and manner that the information was neither gratifying

nor displeasing, but an awakening of intense interest in her at a contemplated important step in his career. Then he thought there was a manner of apprehension—fear or dread in her strained look as the eyes gazed steadfastly into his own. This latter look vanished, however, in an instant and he was inclined to attribute it to some anxiety that moved her on his account regarding the step he was taking. Her words sustained this idea when she spoke, which she did immediately.

"It is a very important step to take now at your —your age," she said with some constraint and anxiety in her voice; "at your age when you may have become somewhat—much in fact—settled in your manner. It may mean much—much indeed, more than you may be inclined to think in shaping your destiny. You know," she went on with a confidential look, her thoughts and words forming themselves more readily upon her mind and tongue as she proceeded, "the life is far from an easy one for a practitioner that amounts to anything. And you"—she regarded him in silence for an instant—"I know are not the kind that will ever belong to the other class."

The latter statement was not only encouraging but gratifying to the listener, and he nodded his silent gratitude. It seemed clear to him now that the doubts she entertained about the step he was taking, and she evidently was beset with them, were not concerning the matter of his success, but of whether he would be able to withstand the strain of the life before him. This latter supposition was strengthened into clear conviction by the following utterance:

"Caldwell, you know," she said with a questioning look, "was robust and strong in appearance,

but the life, I think, wore him out in a few years. His strength could not stand the great strain."

The other nodded acquiescently. "Yes," he rejoined thoughtfuly, "he seemed so strong that I was greatly surprised when I learned of his death. But I have taken into consideration fully all I will have to withstand and go through to make a success of my career, and I believe I will master it all and not succumb like your—your husband and my early companion."

He was moved to some satisfaction at this turn of the conversation. He thought it might lead to throwing some light upon the matter of what kind of a married life the couple had led, the matter upon which he was so entirely ignorant. It was no idle curiosity that moved him to learn this, as it might have been in some circumstances, but a deep earnest interest in the woman he had come to know. He was disappointed, however, for she evaded the subject and turned to another after a brief silence. He might have said more during the silence to lead her on in unfolding some of the matter he was anxious to know, but he was too much of a gentleman to so proceed in a matter that might cause another embarrassment, annoyance or pain.

"There is a big field here in this great, growing city for ambitious practitioners whether male or female," she said with an encouraging look, "and if you, Mr. Langworth, have made up your mind tc follow the profession and are determined to succeed there is no reason why you should not do so, and that you should succeed in all your undertakings is my earnest wish." As she uttered the concluding words there was a perceptible quaver in the voice, and it seemed a faint moisture overspread the dark shining orbs gazing at him. But if

the latter he was not sure as they instantly turned away gazing in another direction.

Then as a silence followed unbroken for some considerable time he thought it time to go, and he signified his intention; then when they reached the door and he gazed into the countenance confronting him and took the hand extended to him as the eyes sank beneath his gaze, it would not have taken much of a seer to have foretold the awakening of something more than friendship between the two, if it had not already awakened.

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN LANGWORTH was very diligent in his application to the study of his chosen profession for the following two years, seldom letting anything else interfere in retarding his goalward efforts. He had made up his mind to conclude his course of instructions within the two years specified and graduate. As the time passed he showed that he was making good progress toward achieving his aim.

After his visit to the West to settle up his affairs there, and the opening up of college, he settled himself down to steady, hard routine work and allowed little in the line of diversion to intrude upon him. He could not escape a yearning, however, for some relaxation, and he invariably sought and found it in a visit to the lady who had so deeply interested him.

He had found a boarding place near the college for expediency in time where collegians made their home. But beyond being on friendly terms with them he did not go. He had no liking for too much intimacy and from it he refrained. Occasionally when he felt a yearning for relaxation he would seek an east-bound street-car and it would whirl him along to the central business section of the city amid the great throng of shoppers, hurrying pedestrians, rushing street-cars and crowding vehicles of every description, rattling, jolting past in one great stream. Then a transfer to a South Side car and another whirl along past rushing traffic and huge buildings devoted to trade and hostelry purposes, and he would soon find himself

reaching more quiet, congenial environments where peace, beauty and tranquility abounded on many sides and he would be within a few steps of the abode of the being he sought.

There were times when he met her by appointment to accompany her to the Authors' Club meetings as an invited guest, though he felt no desire to join the organization. Sometimes on a Sunday evening he sought the place of worship she attended, and at the conclusion of the service met her and walked home with her.

These were pleasant walks replete with all that was desirable in engaging conversation, tranquillity or surroundings and quietude of thought. Time seemed to continually draw them closer together with an even tightening great bond of sympathy and congeniality of mind. There seemed to be a feeling in both that they stood alone apart from the rest of the world, though mixing much with it and their kind, and this feeling drew them closer together in the ever tightening bond.

There were occasions when they stood within the doorway of the woman's abode, or, if the weather was mild, upon the well-sheltered porch-piazza, with the quietude and beauty of night about them after one of these pleasant Sunday night walks in a departing hand-clasp that the man felt a growing almost irresistible impulse to gather his companion in his strong arms and draw her to his breast. But intuitively he felt that he would offend —greviously offend—in so doing and his natural self-control stood him in good stead.

He felt that she needed his close sympathy and friendship, and yearned for these, but shrank from the nearer ties generally called love.

When he pondered deeply about the matter, his

mind was beset with conflicting questions. He would ask himself, did she cherish the memory of her dead husband so dearly and sacredly that she could not ever speak about him to another, less entertain the idea of another warming himself into the position once occupied by him? Or, had there been an element of unhappiness in their lives that the recalling was painful, and her mind was set on never again entering into a union that hazarded the possibility of a similar unhappy experience? These were the foremost questions that beset his mind when a reflection on the matter was enkindled in him. Time as it passed seemingly brought him no nearer a solution of the mystery. He was sure he made no mistake in his reasonings and deductions concerning what was her desire and wish about the nature of their relations, for he possessed a keenly perceptive intuitive mind and was not foolish enough to mistake her manner of reserve for coyness if he showed he was breaking within its barriers too far.

At last the second spring arrived following the one when John Langworth came to Chicago, and the two years of his college life drew to a close. Early summer approached and with it the graduation day that was to give him his diploma and title of doctor with right to practice medicine. He had made a high record in all branches of study and he had good caused to be moved with feelings of joy, pride and gratification when the bright morning of graduation day arrived and he left his abode in company with other collegians bedecked in cap and gown for the exercises that were to take place about noon, and the East Side play house where they were to be held.

When he reached the place with his companions

the auditorium was beginning to fill up with the relatives and friends of the young men who were to be honored with degrees. Then there was bustling about as seats were sought, friends met and greeted friends, and the sound of talking and the hum of voices mingling with the strains of orchestral music filled the air.

The scene was a brilliant one when the graduating class, the faculty and some prominent public men and city officials in procession reached the stage and were seated amid bunting, flowers, foliage and flags, and the auditorium was well filled with family groups of parents, brothers and sisters and many friends of the graduates, smiling and chatting animatedly, the many white dresses of the females in vivid contrast to the general sombre garb of the males, and the proceedings were about to begin.

John Langworth's first act when he was seated was to eagerly scan the audience in search of the face of the being who had entered so much into his existence the past two years.

She had promised to come, and he believed she would do so if it were possible. But he was moved to some apprehensions and misgivings when he failed to locate her in his first scrutinizing search; and when he thought of the uncertainty of her movements owing to her calling, and of the possible demands that might be made on her services to detain her elsewhere, his misgivings were intensified greatly. She was the only near and dear mortal to him, and he felt it would be a great disappointment not to see her sympathetic, encouraging countenance confronting him on this occasion—the one great occasion so far in his life, so he thought.

The next search, however, revealed her in the

balcony. She was dressed in white, which was so becoming to her. A large bunch of violets adorned her breast, and she looked very charming.

She had been watching him, his eager, anxious eyes searching the audience and she tried to catch his gaze. This she did at last and her countenance beamed a glad smile of recognition upon him which he returned. And many a glance was exchanged between them as the exercises progressed. It was with pride and satisfaction that he glanced at her and about the auditorium and realized that amid all the female beauty present she was unsurpassed in grace and loveliness of person. She was as proud of him as he was of her. This was evident the manner she watched him. He was conscious that her eyes were upon him even when he was looking in another direction.

At last all the speech-making and all the exercises and all that pertained to them, came to an end and John Langworth moved away from the stage with his diploma in hand amid the happy, departing groups exchanging greetings, extending congratulations and bidding good-byes, and he sought the one being who was present in honor of him alone.

He met her in the parquet coming toward him. She smiled and clasped his outstretched hand when they met amid the passing throng.

"I congratulate you," she said, her eyes beaming upon him. "I am happy, very happy," she added as she still held his hand and looked frankly into his smiling countenance.

"I think it is one of the happiest days of my life." She had evidently thrown aside all reserve and restraint for the instant in her moved emotions at the greeting and stood frankly before him revealing her true feelings and true self.

The man beamed his gratitude upon her, and for the instant as they both stood smiling with clasped hands looking into each other's glad countenances they were oblivious of everything about them—the hum of voices, the sound of orchestral music, other groups near them talking and the throng moving past them toward the exit, many apparently as happy as themselves.

"It is the happiest day of mine," he replied as her hand slipped from his own. "There is so much to make me happy—so much more than even my own success in achieving all I have achieved this day."

His eyes continued to beam the gratitude he felt upon her till her orbs sank beneath their intensity of gaze.

Then, as the last orchestral strains of "America" were dying away, and the last of the throng was departing they moved toward the exit.

The man escorted his companion from the building and through the busy, crowded streets of the central portion of the city to a less congested section, and to the thoroughfare facing the lake, where they entered a great hostelry, and a spacious dining-room, amid flowers, palms and huge potted plants where the air was vibrant with orchestral strains of sweet melody. Here they were conducted to a table, which had been particularly reserved for them previously, in a quiet corner at an open window facing the lake, where they could gaze out across the intervening park upon the water's shining calm, clear immensity, with the balmy breezes wafted therefrom within the open casement.

After his companion was seated, John Langworth divested himself of his graduation gown by the help of the waiter and seated himself. Then when

the waiter left to attend to bringing the ordered sumptuous repast, taking away the cap and gown at the same time, he looked after these departing symbolical adornments with a smile, and with a gesture in their direction he turned to his companion and said:

"I am now again a plain, inconspicuous ordinary citizen; just a common, ordinary citizen."

"No; you're a titled American," rejoined the woman with a merry laugh.

"I greet you, Dr. Langworth," she went on with mock gravity rising and bowing low to him. Then as she seated herself, she added with genuine candor and a very sweet smile:

"Why, doctor, I even wore my own graduation gown to-day in honor of the event. The idea of doing so gave me much pleasure, and I thought that—that you would be pleased also at the idea when I told you." She blushed lightly when she confessed this in some little confusion, which added much to her womanliness and beauty of person.

The man gazed into her countenance a moment or two before replying, his looks bespeaking his deep feeling and depth of gratitude.

"Pleased," he murmured slowly, in low deep tones scarcely audible, his eyes still gazing into her countenance with tender intensity. "Why, my dearest friend," he went on, as he touched her hand with his own, held it for an instant in his own, and would have raised it reverently to his lips if it had not been for the thought of others within sight of them, "why, I have no words to express my—my deep and sincerest gratitude and—and all that I feel—" He paused in confusion at what was in his mind, and at the look of apprehension and some pain that for an instant passed over her counte-

nance, and, he remained silent in what he was further going to say.

The repast was then brought, and they were soon chatting gayly on what had taken place that day, and on topics in general as they ate the dainties, and the time flew. Then as they looked out on the lake the man proposed a short trip across its glittering bosom on one of the small steam boats that plied here and there in the afternoon. They were not particular where they went, they agreed, so long as it was out on the great, wide shimmering bosom of the lake that now bespoke so much of calm and repose.

John Langworth beckoned to the waiter and instructed him to get his hat, which had previously been left in charge of the hostelry. When the man returned from his mission, he paid the bill, tendering a liberal gratuity to the attendant. Then, after lingering a little longer and indulging in some more conversation they both rose at last, somewhat reluctantly, and left the pleasant environment of flowers, plants and music behind.

Soon they reached the place from which the pleasure crafts sail, and boarded one of them about to depart. They were soon out upon the wide lake with nothing but the stretch of smooth, shining water and the far-off horizon of blue-gray sky and flood meeting in a huge semicircle ahead, while across the glittering water in their rear, showing against the smoky, hazy sky-line was the great city of huge towers and structures they had left behind. They sailed on sitting in a shaded nook, the music from a small string orchestra falling upon their ears, their faces fanned by gentle zephyrs, sometimes moved to conversation, sometimes reflectively inclined to silence, but, happy, supremely happy, all

the time. Finally, when they had penetrated far out into the blue ether and the city was but a shapeless dark haze in their rear, the vessel's prow was turned and pointed in the direction whence they had come. Ultimately the sail came to an end when the afternoon was far spent and they had experienced much unalloyed pleasure.

At the man's request they sought a restaurant and dined again. He explained that they might as well make the day a full one of pleasure, and at the desire of both they sought a street-car bound northward and were soon whirling along. They rode on past the great business centre, and across the murky sluggish river; then past much of the quieter residential localities, and finally reached the confines of Lincoln Park where they alighted. Then they strolled on across the green sward, past the flower beds, by the lagoons and reached the margin of the great lake as the dusk of evening was settling upon the earch and waters.

"We have spent a happy day," said the woman quietly as they seated themselves upon a bench within a few feet of the water and gazed out across its calm surface upon which the evening haze was speedily gathering now obscuring the last faint reflection of the sun's ruddy afterglow. Her tone of utterance bespoke the profoundest gratitude.

The man was silent for a moment or two, then he replied. "Yes," he said, with a far-off look and a sigh, "it has been a happy day, a very happy one, the happiest of my life."

Then his eyes looked into the woman's face. But the dusk was gathering so that she could not clearly see the expression there when she met his gaze for an instant before she turned her own away. She thought, however, that it bespoke much

love and gratitude, so much love as to cause her to turn away quickly with some feelings of apprehension.

He took her hand lying by her side and held it. She tried to gently disengage it, and said in mild protest: "Don't, please don't. Let us be friends, good friends, as we have been so long. I would rather we would be friends; true friends; friends only and always."

The voice possessed much earnest pleading and there was a tremulousness about its tones of entreaty unmistakable to the listener bespeaking some dread or fear.

"We've been like children, as happy and carefree as children to-day," she went on in the same manner. "Let us be the same. We'll be happier that way. I would sooner we remain friends, friends always as we have been so long."

At this pleading he was moved to relent and let go the hand.

"But you know children hold hands," he mildly protested with a smile as he gazed into her face. "Did you never hold hands in those days?" He assumed a manner of light-hearted banter, that he was far from possessing, with the idea of restoring his companion's previous confidence and cheerfulness.

"I do not recall much of my childhood days," she replied, turning away her gaze. "I hadn't many of them."

There was a sadness in her tone different to what he had expected and desired his words of banter would produce, and, realizing this, he said no more on the subject.

Then he talked of the graduation exercises and the woman's customary cheerfulness gradually re-

turned and she joined animatedly in the conversation, and they were both apparently as carefree as previously. They talked pleasantly and cheerfully on many topics as they sat there and he did not try to take her hand again; not at least until some hours later when they reached her abode and they stood within the doorway saying good night. Then he held her hand in a long gentle clasp as if making up for all that had been denied him. He seemed as if he was never going to let it go till he said: "Good night; we've been children to-day, and so happy; haven't we? I'll call to-morrow."

She smiled and answered: "Good night," with a sigh; and he was gone.

CHAPTER X.

JOHN LANGWORTH had put forth so much diligent efforts for the past two years in insuring his undoubted success when graduation arrived that now he felt like resting and dallying for the time being when his object was achieved. His plans for the immediate future were somewhat indefinite and obscure.

About all he was sure of was that he would stay in Chicago and build up a practice. He did not know, however, when he would make a start and in what locality.

The warm summer weather that had just begun, along with the ending of his arduous efforts in study, was principally responsible for the indecision, and he felt like resting for a time. Besides, he was not pressed to any immediate activity from financial reasons as he still had some few thousands of dollars left for his use.

When the evening of the day following the day of his graduation arrived he sought the presence of the companion of the previous day whose companionship had done so much to make it a day of unalloyed pleasure and joy. He had come to regard her advice as invaluable and almost indispensable, and it was to be expected that he would seek much of it at this juncture.

She met him with her customary greeting but the fact was evident to his scrutinizing gaze that there was some manner of anxiety, diffidence and apprehension about her. This he noticed more fully when they reached the familiar reception-

room where through the fast gathering twilight and the curtain-shaded windows the last faint rays of the sun's afterglow was penetrating.

They seated themselves near the casement of the open window for the cool comfort thus afforded as the evening was warm. But though the evening was warm as the day had been, yet a cool, refreshing breeze blew from the lake across the environing lawns wafting with it the fragrance of newly-watered grass and flowers within the open window.

They talked for some time about the mutual pleasures they had enjoyed the previous day, which was very interesting to both. Then they spoke about the man's future; of his coming practice of the profession he had chosen, but to him this did not produce the interest its importance called for. His mind was evidently beset with something of a different nature and of more interest to him, and he soon began to make languid suggestions and replies. Then they both fell into a reflective silence which was maintained for a considerable time. At last he broke the silence. When his voice began to frame the first word the woman seemed to know what was coming and she looked at him apprehensively.

"I have wondered—often wondered," he said with slow hesitancy produced by natural diffidence at broaching the subject, and some difficulty he experienced in framing his thoughts and words so they should be clear, "if it is rare or common that the early cases of affection of the sexes called love —that affection that leads to the marriage union— are so deep, profound and lasting as to preclude the possibility of further affection toward a further union when death has been the separator. Do

the mated in these cases sometimes love—love with such deep—very deep—affection and is the love so sacred and lasting as to make another affection treason to the memory of the dead, and an impossibility?"

He was too intent upon his thoughts and utterances as he proceeded to fully note their effect upon the one addressed though his gaze was bent keenly and searchingly upon the confronting countenance but a few feet from his own. Even if he had tried his best he would have experienced much difficulty in discerning the changing expressions of the face clearly owing to the growing dimness of the light of the room. He knew, however, his utterance had caused much mental disquietude.

The woman was silent for a time after he ceased as if on the defensive, and he regarded her with a look of intent inquiry waiting for a reply. She had watched him keenly, her eyes narrowing as he proceeded, intent on catching the full import of his utterance, which she evidently did though he was neither so lucid nor so simple in the choice of expression as was usually his wont. At last she spoke, still regarding him through her narrowed lids.

"I should think such cases you mention are very rare," she said with some hesitancy, "such cases of so deep affection. I, myself, never came across such cases, though I have heard of them," she went on with more candor and freedom of restraint; "and if they exist, which I believe they do, they must be very rare, very rare indeed. In fact, my candid opinion is that marriage is oftener a matter of accommodation than a matter of real and deep affection." The latter sentence was enunciated with considerable added force of emphasis.

Then she proceeded in her previous quiet, deliberate manner:

"The woman generally marries the man because she wants a home and someone to maintain her, and the man generally because he wants a wife and the accommodation of a home. It is simple, very simple. I do not want you to think I am heartless, for I am not. I regret such conditions, but they exist, nevertheless, grossly exist and are the rule, I think. I am speaking my honest convictions from observations and from"—she hesitated and regarded him in silence for a moment or two as she nervously fumbled a small volume she had taken up from the nearby stand—"and from personal experience, to be candid, and to disabuse your mind from any erroneous ideas you may have formed of me. Yes, from personal experience," she added with more force.

"It is from that as well as from observations that I speak." She folded one hand over the other resignedly, and her head moved in a reflective inclination.

"I decided to tell you this," she proceeded after the pause with a sad, wistful look at the man, "to disillusion you if you had got the idea that mine was a marriage of love; for it was not. I married simply as the majority marry, for a home and the advantages it gave me. And those advantages I received were great to me in my condition then; incalculably great, in fact. I was poor—poor—wretchedly poor"—her voice trembled and her utterance was broken—"as my family was and all connected with me; and all I am to-day I owe to that union that brought about emancipation from wretched, grinding toil, poverty and ignorance."

She buried her face in her hands and a sob

burst from her lips, that bespoke the deepest anguish of soul and body, a wrenching of them both by mortal pain.

The man regarded her with a look of the deepest compassion, compassion unalloyed by any selfish sexual instinct and felt he would have given the world then to have caught her in his arms in a protecting, encircling bond of sympathy and love that would not have hazarded misinterpretation or offense.

"You belittle yourself, disparage your own abilities, your natural talents," he said in deep, sympathetic tones. "You owe your position much to yourself; for you would have risen in any circumstances, because it is in you to do so."

The woman turned a sad, tearful face to him.

"The instinct to rise is in most mortals," she replied as she shook her head slowly, "but the many never get a chance. Environments of poverty, ignorance and hard work with long hours, and a growing difficulty to even obtain the hard work with the long hours and retain it, and poorly fed and poorly nourished bodies, all the inheritance of the poor that tends to develop that which is low in mortals instead of all that is high, are too much for them, or the generality of them, and they cannot rise. I could never have risen in those circumstances, but chance put in my way something better.

"I met a man who was my better socially, financially and in many respects. He offered me a home with comfort and ease, which offer I accepted. I became environed by books and influences that were uplifting, and I uplifted myself from contact with these elevating influences. All the libraries in the world with access to them would otherwise have been useless to me. The poor do

not generally patronize the libraries. The cent evening newspaper, and the most sensational one at that, or the cheapest fiction, is about all their tired minds and bodies are able to digest after the long day's grind and drive, to which they are subject, is over. It is generally the well-to-do who patronize the libraries, those who could well afford to pay for the fiction—the light fiction that is generally their chosen mental diet—that they get for nothing."

"But," interposed the other gently, "I cannot help disagreeing with you when you lay your uplift entirely to your fortunate change of environments and influences, for those same environments and influences would have been but an incentive to frivolity, idleness, extravagance and thoughtlessness in many of your sex. You have much to thank yourself for in all you did; yourself that has made you a cultured woman. You might have risen in other circumstances."

The woman shook her head with decision.

"No," she said reflectively, "no; the odds were too great. With a man it is possible and not so rare, but with a woman it is almost impossible. It might be easy for those who have got some little start in the upward climb, however, some little advantage in home influences and surroundings, in education, or in some calling that is a little better than that which subjects women to the long, arduous daily grind for small pay. But for the many, where all this is lacking"—she shook her head ominously—"it is almost impossible. Why," she went on with vehemence and all evidence of her tearfulness gone, "why, most forces seem to combine against her uplift and tend to keep her down as they generally tend to keep down the poor.

Men who will give bountifully to public beneficiaries are sometimes the very men who have been foremost in crushing their least fortunate fellow mortals—subjecting them to long hours of arduous toil for small pay, sweating, grinding and wearing out by degrees their lives, souls and bodies. And as long as this latter process goes fully on it is bound to fall most oppressively upon women, the weaker vessel." She paused, her manner less impassioned and gazed across the room into space for a few moments.

Then in a mild, conciliatory manner she resumed.

"I do not hold the poor blameless by any means," she said turning her gaze upon her companion. "They are in the great majority and could rectify things if they had the will and the intelligence. But, unfortunately, they have neither, and while they continue to be bountiful producers of ignorance and poverty in offspring the few will flourish at their cost and exploit them for their own selfish ends. Nor do I wish to rail against the rich for they do not monopolize the vices, selfishness and failings by any means. It is far from a rarity of the once poor, when they become possessed of wealth and power, to become the severest taskmasters and oppressors. Human nature is very much the same in all classes and conditions. It is only the few who are very bad. The most of us are better than nature made us. But I did not mean to make this either a diatribe against one class or in favor of another. I inadvertently drifted into the one turn of the discourse in putting before you an idea of the terrible struggles of the poor of which you may be far from conversant owing to your little experience of the great cities where their struggles are the keenest and their deg-

radation and privation the worst. I know what it all is because I have run the gamut of it all. My family was poor, very poor and lowly." She shook her head in sad contemplation at this recalling as she paused.

"Well, there is more credit due you where you are to-day," said the man in deep, sympathetic tones. "To be poor is no disgrace."

"But it is the author of much misery and disgrace," replied the woman; "incalculable misery and disgrace. And what is it all for, all this human suffering and misery?" she sadly asked. "Surely no all-wise Creator could have meant it to be so bad as it really is? And for what purpose is it all? If we knew or could tell that from it all came some permanent good, or that it was for some great permanent, lasting purpose, all this life and suffering, it would not be so bad." Her countenance and gaze bespoke the deepest anguish and solicitude as she asked the questions—anguish as she thought of the depth of human misery and degradation extant, and solicitude for some light to be shed upon the clouds that encompassed and beset her mind upon the matter of for what purpose it was all meant.

"You know," she went on after a brief pause less impassioned in her manner, "I am far from orthodox in my religious views, though I am a regular attendant at church. In that respect I am not unlike many of my fellow worshippers except insomuch that I do not accept the situation without some perplexing thought and questioning of the mind, much questioning in fact.

"I am somewhat of a rebel, you know," she said in conclusion; "much of a rebel I believe." She rose as she concluded, took a few paces across the

room and back, then stood gazing out at the night through the open casement.

"Your questions," said the man thoughtfully, as he gazed at the woman, "of what is all this life about, and for what purpose, are the questions, I suppose, that have beset the thinking minds of the ages and puzzled them, and they will likely be the questions that will still continue to be asked throughout the coming ages and still remain unanswerable and unsolvable. All we poor mortals, who came here without any design of our own, can try and believe is that in it all there is some great purpose of the Divine and Omnipotent, which I really believe there is. The misery, suffering and privation, however, would not be in vain if from their crucible such steeling metal, as we sometimes see, was more the general rule of production than the exception." He rose as he spoke.

"Yes," he went on with increasing depth of utterance and intensity of gaze, "such metal as I believe is the composite whole of you, my dearest friend."

He drew near to the side of the woman, who after listening to him in some confusion and nervous apprehension turned her gaze without the window in some fear. Then when he reached her side he took her trembling hand, that shook like a leaf within his own strong hand, which she did not try to withdraw.

"Let us—you and I—walk together," he said in low, deep tones, "walk through life hand in hand as one with one purpose, sympathizing and ministering to each other, condoning and serving, loving and agreeing as fate meant us to do—then this life of ours, at least, will not have been in vain, and to no purpose."

Tremblingly the woman continued to gaze out at

the darkness that was now quickly gathering, and at the avenue lights that were beginning to sparkle through the gloom, moved to much agitation of mind and body, and she did not answer him immediately.

Then, after a few moments silence, that seemed to be much longer in the strained quietude that reigned, she turned her eyes, that were much tear-dimmed, to his timidly with a look bespeaking some affright.

"I feared—feared this, and tried hard to guard against it," she faltered in low, weak tones. "I desired it not to be, and would that we could have gone on as before, friends and friends only. But I have been helpless in—in loving you; helpless and can deny you nothing. I feel my utter helplessness."

Then, as a fresh flood of doubts and fears swept through her mind, she asked pleadingly and falteringly: "Oh, John, is there no other way? Can we not go on as before—friends, dear friends? I would rather it be so because I fear—fear so much for the future."

The man gazed into her eyes in silence for some moments as he held her hand in his own.

"Why, what should you fear?" he cried. "You have nothing to fear for the future. You can trust in me, you know—trust in me until death. If there is anything you fear, tell me, confide in me; tell me all; I will sweep away your fears. You do not fear or doubt me, surely? You will always be the same to me no matter what betide, to the end, to eternity."

"I do not fear or doubt you, John. I fear and doubt the future, because—because I love you so!" Then she asked pleadingly:

"And you will always care for me the same to the end, no matter what betide?"

For answer the man's hand tightened upon her own, and he drew her to him, gazing into her timid eyes till he encircled her in his strong arms and he felt her breast beating against his own. "Forever," he whispered as he held her thus, "forever. You will always be the same to me through years, through age, to eternity no matter what befall. I shall always care for you and love you as I do now and have done for so long since we met."

She felt like an infant in his arms, too helpless to resist, and at least she had no desire to do so.

"John," she murmured, "I love you as I have done so long. I tried hard to fight against it, but to no purpose. I felt too helpless. Once I thought that no man would ever fill the place in my heart that you fill. Not long ago I refused a man of considerable wealth and position who avowed his love for me. I had little difficulty in doing that because I did not love him.

"But I love you, John, and have been helpless in resisting doing so. You are the first and only man I ever loved."

"Annetta, my darling," whispered the man as he strained her to his breast and his lips met hers in a passionate, lingering caress. "Annetta, my own." And the only sound that broke the quiet for some moments was the ticking of the French clock upon the mantel.

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE the passing of six weeks John Langworth graduate in medicine and Annetta Winngath, practitioner of the same, were united in those holy bonds that nothing but death is supposed to part, much to the surprise of some of the acquaintances of the latter who were members of the same church she attended and associates of the same social organization, the Authors' Club. To some of the young men who were better acquainted with her financial standing than was the man she had chosen for a mate when he led her to the altar, they having known her late husband and some of his affairs from repute, and had cherished dreams of leading her where she had now been led, the news came somewhat in the form of a shock and a blow. Some of the young ladies, however, felt the keenest satisfaction in the turn of affairs for they had not been free from some misgivings regarding the culmination of their own affairs of the heart while an attractive young widow with a paying medical practice and the owner of a house and a considerable bank account was free to attract and ensnare. Some said that she was lucky in getting such a pleasant, attractive manly young man, while others remarked that she might have done better and ought to have done so, and the matter that was the gossip for a few days was allowed to rest.

The marriage was a simple, quiet affair free from much of the show and ostentation that often marks those ceremonies. Nevertheless, the president of the Authors' Club, though not overpleased

at the happening, could not refrain from writing it up and elaborating upon it in no small manner in his usual flowery style.

It was a considerable article describing the ceremony, and it occupied a prominent place in the columns of the "Sentinel and Star." He stated to the public in conclusion, that the happy couple were starting on a tour of the lakes and lower Canada, and would be at home to their friends and receive them on the first day of the following month.

This was the itinerary of the newly wedded couple. They believed it would be conducive to much pleasure and health-giving in the cool atmosphere in the regions they were to visit. They had discussed the matter for weeks preceding the ceremony that made them one.

They sailed up through the great lakes all the way to Buffalo with the gentle summer breezes of those inland seas, cool and invigorating, playing about them. Then they proceeded to Niagara Falls where they made a stay of a few days near the great cateract within the sound of its unceasing murmur, and amid the cooling moisture of its diffused spray; anon they journeyed through lower Canada to Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec making a stay at each place and proceeded by short stages home in a more direct way, reaching there after a month's absence with the recollection of a journey spent of unalloyed pleasure and joy.

One of their first attentions, when they returned to the abode that had been the woman's and was now the home of both, was to have another name added to those upon the sign in the window, that had been wont to inform the public that Annetta Winngath, M. D., was consultable at certain hours,

and another sign added to the other side of the window informing the public that John Langworth, M. D., was at their services.

Then after the homecoming functions of receiving their friends they settled down to the steady routine of everyday life. But there was little lacking interest, pleasure and happiness in this routine, with nothing of the nature of the daily grind that often makes married domesticity irksome and tiring after the novelty of its initial experience has worn away.

In them the possibility of domestic discord was almost eliminated. Both had passed through a varied experience of life that had broadened their mental scope, and reached an age and condition when this broadening was likely to be permanent in its development, and continual in its process There was a mutual interest in occupation, a similarity in temperaments that were even and rational. Their tastes were the same, their desires of like nature and the chance of an introduction of the inharmonious in their lives was reduced to minimum. They understood the art of making mutual concessions, if this were needed in their intercourse, which is so sadly lacking in the generality of mankind. But this was hardly ever needed for there was a harmonious accordance in all their mutual transactions, doings and happenings. Their domestic life was as near the ideal as human existence could be possible.

The man gradually built up a lucrative practice and the woman increased her own, and with simple tastes there was more means coming in than would amply supply all their needs, even with the putting apart of a goodly sum, which eliminated any financial problem, that prolific cause of domestic discord.

As time passed the man continued to remain the lover rather than the husband, always courteous, deferent and obliging, never lacking in the little niceties that smooth life's journey and takes the rough edge off existence, and which are supposed to be but pre-nuptial or briefly existent in duration after that period.

"Why, John," the woman said one day, "we will soon be married a whole year. Doesn't the time fly? And to think," she added, looking shyly into his eyes, "that you and I haven't had even a cross word, let alone the remotest sign of a quarrel. Isn't it wonderful?" She regarded him playfully for an instant, then this manner gave way to a more serious one as she continued to regard him.

She had just entered the front parlor, where her husband sat, after attending to some household duties.

The man had looked up from the paper he had been reading at the first sound of her utterance.

"Not so wonderful," was his rejoinder with a complacent smile, "when the fact is apparent that I could not quarrel with you if I wanted to, and you could not quarrel with me if you wanted to. There is neither of us would permit it. But if some domestic discord would add interest and diversion to life," he went on jocularly, "we might manage to introduce some, somehow. We might get some of our relatives here, for instance. They have a reputation, you know, of stirring up things on the domestic hearthstone. But mine are so few and so far away in the far West, and yours are so few and so far away in the far East that I do not know how we can manage it. Yours are the nearer, however, and you might manage to get some of them here with an effort."

The smile vanished from the woman's face at the latter reference to her relatives and a cloud overcast it.

"You know," she said with some agitation, "as I told you, I have no idea where any of my relatives are since my mother's death which left me without my parents, and but only one sister, the only near kin, and I've not heard from her for years, a good many years."

The man noted the change in his wife's countenance and demeanor and thinking it possibly indicative of some perturbation at his light reference to her relatives he was quick to make that which he thought reparation for his offense.

"I knew—remembered that you had no parents," he explained, hurriedly. "If it had been otherwise I would not have referred in the least joking manner to your kin. But having the fact in my mind that you were in about the same condition as myself, with none or few near relatives, I realized no offense in a little levity on the matter of them."

"It is not that, John," was the quick reply, "I was not thinking of that at all. No such idea entered my head as offense at what you said. I was thinking of something—something else entirely. Sometimes I wonder," she went on reflectively, "if this can last, can possibly last, all this happiness of ours, yours and mine. It all seems so much more than I ever expected, and much more——" a sad wistful smile stole over her face—"than I probably ever deserved. I often wonder if it will last, can last," she looked appealingly down into the countenance of her husband with an inquiring gaze.

The latter thought it was some passing mood of his wife and with an idea of dispelling it he threw

his paper aside, sprang to his feet and caught her in his arms in an encircling tender clasp.

"Deserve it all," he repeated in subdued tender accents as his eyes gazed compassionately into the liquid depth of the dark orbs confronting him and he anxiously scanned the countenance, "why, you deserve all the world, all the world can give, my dear one, my wife." And disengaging one of his hands he moved it caressingly across the woman's dark locks, stroking them tenderly as a mother might stroke the locks of her babe slumbering in her lap, as if they had been the most precious thing in the world.

Under his touch the expression of anxiety and perturbation gave place to one of calm ecstatic serenity. "It was only a passing disturbing thought," she whispered as she nestled closer to him, resting her head securely upon his strong shoulders, feeling much security thereby. "Only a phantom of a mind disturbed. But it is all gone now."

After the passing of a few months more the happiness of both was consummated—if it was possible for them to be happier than they had been—in the birth of a daughter. There was no doubt, however, as time went on that this advent added to their cup of joy, filling it to the brim as the small tongue began to frame the names of the parents. Then when the little feet began to toddle the floor and more lisping words were added to its vocabulary an addition of sunshine was added to the home.

They called the little one by the same name as the maternal parent. It was the desire of the sire that they should do so, and the other acquiesced readily in this as she did in all that he wished.

CHAPTER XII.

To HAVE found a home that was more of a haven of felicity, congeniality and tranquility than was this home would have been a difficult matter. The man loved all the inanimate surroundings with much of the ardency that he loved his wife and child, for it was part of them and no other place could afford him the least pleasure he experienced there. He was proud of his home as he was proud of his wife and child and any addition to its beauty, which was added from time to time in adornment and improvement, he was wont to regard with a similar pleasure that he regarded the growing beauty of his wife and child. These two seemed to grow in grace of person from day to day, always improving in his sight, adding to the pride he felt in them.

He would watch the expression of thought and care deepening upon his wife's countenance as time went on adding spirituality to her rare type of physical beauty, and seeing in this but a developing mentality and growing spirituality he was pleased as he was pleased in the growing beauty of the little prattling child. Thus the days, months and seasons passed replete in their fullest with genuine pleasure and satisfaction to the man.

One day, however, when the child was about eighteen months old, he was somewhat startled as well as perturbed by the expression on his wife's countenance as she regarded the little one playing upon the carpet with some simple toys. It was an expression that seemed to bespeak the deepest an-

guish and apprehension, and he caught a full view of it as he looked up from his newspaper. It was gone, however, in an instant. Then he began to doubt whether he had seen aright.

"Are you feeling quite well, Annetta?" he asked in some anxiety. "I thought you did not look quite well just now. Is there anything the matter?"

The woman essayed a smile as she turned her gaze to him. But it was evident at a glance that the smile cost her some effort, and did not bespeak her feelings aright.

"Why, John," she rejoined, moved now to some genuine pleasure at her husband's evidently displayed anxiety on her account, "why I really believe you are getting somewhat old-fogeyish in your anxiety about your family. I really do, you dear old fellow." There was a playfulness about her now that was unmistakably genuine and evident to him and it afforded him much pleasure.

"Why you dear old fellow," she added slipping to the back of his chair and throwing her arms about his neck, "there is nothing the matter with me; so don't worry."

He raised her arms and drew her down by his side till she rested on the carpet and her face was close to his.

"I hope there is not; I trust there is not," was his fervent reply as he held her and gazed into the depths of her eyes. "If there should be," he added as his hand passed caressingly over her soft dark hair crowning her smooth white brow, "you will keep nothing from me, will you?"

She did not reply immediately, but regarded him scrutinizingly for a moment or two.

"Why, what could I keep from you, John?" she asked after the pause. "Why, I was merely feeling

a little out of humor when you first spoke; that was all." And she pressed her lips to his and hurriedly rose to attend to some duty.

He felt reassured by her words and manner, and the matter was dismissed from his mind.

Some weeks after this, however, he came upon her unexpectedly when she believed him out. He had been out on some professional duty and had returned and entered the house by the aid of his latch key unknown to her. He had closed the door quietly as was his wont and his feet had passed noiselessly over the deep rich carpet of the front reception room to the inner one where he came in sight of his wife, as he reached the entrance, sitting with her head buried in her hands resting on the table. She had evidently been quite alone with no one else near. The attitude might have been that of one resting from weariness, or one in profound thought, or even slumber, and it awoke no uneasiness in him or gave him any troubled concern. He was about to give voice to some subdued utterance, to let his presence be known without startling her if she were not slumbering, when he was arrested in this by the sight of the form moving slightly and the sound of a faintly audible sob escaping her.

In an instant the man's attitude of complacency wholly vanished and a strained set expression settled about his eyes. "Annetta," he cried, as he sprang across the room to her side, seized her in his arms and turned her face to his, "Annetta, what is the matter?" He saw at once, at the first glance at her startled face, before she could reply, that something serious was apparently the matter, for her eyes were much bedimmed with tears and he had never seen her thus before. As her tearful eyes looked into his own his arm tightened about her

and he raised her to her feet till she rested upon his breast in a sheltering clasp in his arms. Then, as she rested there tiredly, like a tired, grieving child might have done, and her head sank upon his shoulders as a deep sigh escaped her, he did not press immediately for a reply, but waited patiently for her to speak. At first as he held her thus and waited, her heart beat tumultuously against his breast in great quick throbs, and the respiration of her bosom in its violent rise and fall was like the disturbed ocean when moved by storms; then gradually the agitated undulations subsided till they were calm and scarcely perceptible like the breathing of a slumbering child. Then amid this calm she raised her head and met his anxious gaze. She looked at him somewhat shamefacedly through her tear bedimmed eyes and essayed a smile.

"What is it, Annetta, what is the trouble?" the man whispered tenderly in assuring accents. The woman hesitated a moment or two before replying.

"Why, John—John, you will think I'm an awful —awful baby," she murmured in confused faltering tones as her eyes looked into his, then turned away in confusion.

"No, no," he gently protested, "tell me, tell me what it is. There must be something."

"Why, it is nothing, John, nothing serious," she answered, affecting a careless manner. "Merely a mood—a passing mood—that comes over me sometimes, once in a while lately, and then is gone. But, John, you startled me a little when you first came in," she went on with growing cinfidence. "I thought you were out at the time."

This description of the ailment by his wife was what the man's own mind had begun to suggest to him as the matter. It seemed to him a periodic at-

tack of melancholia, and that now he had noticed the change in her since shortly after the birth of the child, but the change had been scarcely perceptible as she had done her best to hide it. Now he began to formulate his own theory therefrom. Such changes in a mother following the birth of her child were not so very rare he knew, and from this reflecting he was considerably disturbed in mind. He would have to watch and guard her carefully he told himself.

Then, when she showed a desire to disengage herself from his embrace, he led her to a seat and seated himself by her side.

He took her hand and assumed an air of fitting concern without the appearance of unusual anxiety.

"Have these moods been frequent or very rare?" was his solicitous query with a searching gaze.

"Just occasionally—on rare occasions," she replied assuringly in quiet low tones, returning his look.

This was not so bad as he had thought, and he nodded with satisfaction. "It could not be very bad, after all," he mused: "just a mood, a passing mood of melancholia." Then he said aloud with assurance: "It will pass off gradually, I think; pass off before long."

Then they sat in reflective silence for quite a few moments, unbroken by either, the man still holding the woman's hand, and both gazing across the distance of the room. One's thoughts were far away ranging across the gulf of distant years resurrecting the past, seeing much that she would like to close from her gaze forever; the other's thoughts were concentrated nearby upon the loved one who awakened so much concern in him for her well-being.

Then the woman spoke: "John," she said, as she

looked him in the eyes with a gaze that bespoke some fear and apprehension, "a dread comes over me at times that this happiness of ours—this great happiness—cannot last. A foreboding tells me this —tells me that it will not continue—it cannot continue. It seems we've been too happy, more happy than I expected, looked for or deserved, and I sometimes fear for the future."

"I do not fear for the future," replied the man with confidence and assurance in his look and tone. "But I fear—fear a little—for you," he went on, with some doubt in his manner, "especially when you talk so of some foreboding evil when there is no reason for it. If you go on that way"—he frowned and shook his head in mock severity—"I'll have to prescribe for you, I will. I don't like to do it, but I will have to do so to put a stop to this nonsense."

The woman caught the infection of his raillery. "If you do," she said with a smile, "and your prescribing does not effect a speedy cure I will call in other skill and discard yours." Then, looking at the clock she sprang to her feet with energy and spirit and all evidence of her previous mood gone. "Why," she cried with animation, "I'll have to go and see how baby is getting along, she's been sleeping so long, and how Mary is getting along with the dinner."

CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW weeks following the closing incidents of the preceding chapter John Langworth sat alone amid the pleasant surroundings of the front reception room with his thoughts for company. These thoughts were of the pleasantest, recalling much that was gratifying to him. He remembered that it was over five years since he came to Chicago and three years since his graduation. He sat recalling these facts and the incidents of his early days in this city that led to his adopting the medical profession in preference to his returning to follow the same life he had followed for ten years in the West.

With vividness he recalled his graduation day and all the joyful incidents thereof with the utmost delight. It was just three years to the very day, he recalled. Ah! he would never forget that day, he thought. He and his companion had been children that day, his companion and wife that was to be, children in all their simple pleasures and lack of care. It was just a similar day to this one in every respect, he remembered, as he recalled the clear balmy sunshine and breezes and the same streaming in and penetrating the partly shaded and partly open windows.

It was with feelings of unusual tenderness that he now thought of his wife who was out on some professional mission. He wished now, as he had often wished lately, that she would not be so zealous in following her calling. He was afraid she would tire herself out, for she was so much occupied at one

thing and another, and there was no necessity for it from a financial standpoint as his income alone was now more than ample for all their needs. But he knew it was pride in her profession and desire to do good that impelled her on, and the same pride in her home that made her so busy there and take so much interest in it. On this account he had refrained from saying anything against her course except on the rarest occasions, and in the gentlest chiding manner possible.

As the thus mused he could faintly catch the familiar sounds of domesticity from distant parts of the house—the audibleness of the two maids in their daily duties, and the discernible prattle of the child in her playroom—mingling with the further-off sounds of the outside world.

Somehow his thoughts drifted to a recalling of Hilkley Tweedwell as he sat there. The man had scarcely ever entered his mind since their brief meeting and parting years ago in the West. In fact, he felt no desire to recall him, for the impression he had carried away concerning him was far from a pleasing one. The only gratitude he had ever felt for him was at the thought that he had been a part instrumental in bringing about the pleasant state of affairs, insomuch that he had spoken of the other college companion being located in Chicago, and thereby furnished some directions that had resulted in meeting the woman who was now his wife.

He had never even mentioned Hilkley Tweedwell's name to his wife or spoken about him to her. He had felt some reluctance in doing so when he had explained to her that he had gotten some clue to the whereabouts of her husband's location from

a college companion whom he had met casually in the West. He had told about the accident on the railroad, and touched lightly on the part he had played in dragging himself and a fellow passenger to land. There had been considerable about the manner of the man whose life he had saved that had left far from a favorable impression. This, with the remembrance of the incidents of their last outing together in New York had intensified his desire not to speak about him to his wife. Besides, to speak about a companion of her late husband was in a manner resurrecting the latter to memory, and as his wife had on all occasions shown a desire to avoid this, the desire had been reciprocated on his part.

Now as he thought of Hilkley Tweedwell he wondered what had come of him; if he had returned to the location of his home and started anew as he stated he might do when so advised; if he had resumed his domestic companionship with his wife whom he had forsaken and whom he was wont to denounce so severely.

This denunciation of his spouse, wherein the blame of all his misfortunes and failures was laid to the woman had been far from productive of the desired aim of showing him in the light of matrimonial martyr. John Langworth had drawn his own deductions from what he had heard and the manner of the man. These deductions had shown him in anything but a favorable light without concluding that the woman was blameless. There were faults on both sides, he reasoned, probably serious faults.

Now, however, he was inclined to regard Hilkley Tweedwell's faults more lightly than hitherto.

Probably if he had gotten a wife with half the virtues and abilities of his own he would have been a different man entirely, he reasoned.

As he reasoned thus about the man, regarding him in a much more favorable light than he had ever done before, he dismissed him from his mind.

John Langworth had not long done this and was thinking of other matters of little importance when the door-bell rang and his mind was brought into active speculation regarding the visitor and what his business might be. He could see through the Venetian blinds that it was the form of a man at the door, and when he heard the maid moving in that direction to answer the summons he remained seated to await the visitor being ushered within. When this took place the form of a man, tall and well proportioned, stepped through the doorway and the master of the house rose to meet him with an ordinary bow as was his wont, his eyes at first not plainly discerning the features of the visitor in the gloom of the window-shaded room. But in an instant more as he drew nearer, and his eyes looked more closely into those of the visitor, he paused in astonishment and an exclamation of surprise formed itself on his lips. "Tweedwell!" he cried; "why, who would have expected!"

"Yes, who would have expected, indeed! such as your humble servant turning up as he has done," was the response as the man stepped forward with outstretched hand and a broad smile upon his face. "Why, Langworth!" he went on, as their hands met in a clasp and their eyes looked closely into each others, then scanned each other lineaments intently, "why, we—you and I—seem to be destined to meet in strange circumstances. Fate seems to throw us together in an unusual manner.

This meeting is strange—strange even as the other was. You were the last one in the world I expected to meet when I came here to trace up my old companion, Dr. Caldwell Winngath. Now I meet Dr. Langworth instead. What will it be next? And to think," he proceeded hurriedly after the briefest pause for breath, "that I should meet you here—you, Dr. Langworth—with your sign upon the very house to which I had traced Dr. Winngath by the aid of an old directory."

John Langworth had been almost too surprised to formulate any lucid connective sentence as his gaze rested on the visitor and the most he felt capable of doing as the hurried flow of utterance emanated from him was to gaze in surprise and nod to what the man said. Now as he paused after the reference to the deceased practitioner the former's surprise vanished.

"Caldwell Winngath—Dr. Winngath," he said, reflectively, "has gone the long journey, long ago. He had been dead about two years when I last saw you and came here. I looked up his address when I came to the city and found it by the same aid as you. Mrs. Winngath was residing here and I met her."

A quizzical expression settled on the visitor's countenance at the latter information.

"And you have made great strides, Dr. Langworth, since I last saw you, evidently—graduated in medicine, practicing, have a fine home, and—married, I suppose?" A nod and look of inquiry accompanied the latter words.

"I was married about three years ago, soon after I graduated in medicine," was the quiet reply. The lady I married was the widow of Dr. Winngath. She was already a medical practitioner when I met

her, and I believe her influence—or rather the influence she unconsciously exercised over me was the cause of my seeking the profession that I thought I had abandoned forever more than ten years previously."

"Well, it is all surprising, very surprising," was the reflective comment of the other. "I saw nothing more of Winngath and heard little of him after I went West that time, when the three of us were together after the closing of college and my graduation, except once from that college acquaintance I accidently dropped across in the West that I told you of when I last saw you."

His gaze dropped from the other's countenance to the floor and he studied the carpet abstractedly for a time. "Well, well," he commented musingly, "so Winngath has gone the long and last road long ago. It's all very surprising when you think what a big, strong fellow he was. And so you married Winngath's widow?" he asked, looking up into the other's countenance.

There appeared a light manner about the utterance that jarred the listener somewhat. He acquiesced with a slow, dignified inclination of the head. This dignified manner did not altogether please the visitor. "He is getting somewhat uppish," was his inward comment as his eyes narrowed and his mouth hardened.

"Yes, I married her," was the explanation in a quiet, thoughtful manner, "and I have married one of the best creatures that ever drew the breath of life"—he shook his head impressively—"the truest and the best." There was a reverence about the man and the utterance that made the visitor open his eyes and show general surprise in his looks.

The latter had evidently expected a reply somewhat different. Not only was he so accustomed to hearing himself decrying his own spouse and declaiming against her, but it was not uncommon for him to hear others doing likewise in reference to the companions they had taken for better or worse, and he was far from pleased.

His mind had already been busy formulating suggestions that the marriage on the man's part had been simply a matter of what material benefit he could derive from it, and nothing more, when he was somewhat disabused of that idea by the unexpected unfoldings.

"Gad, Langworth, you're a lucky man!" he exclaimed, as he patted the one addressed on the shoulder in an effort at cordiality that cost him some strain. "You're as extremely lucky as I have been extremely unlucky."

The host then asked the visitor to be seated and seated himself. Then they both remained silent for a time, each deeply occupied with his own thoughts for a few seconds, gazing into space.

Hilkley Tweedwell was engaged gazing down the vista of the past, resurrecting much of the departed years that recalled vividly to him a full realization of his own miserable failure in life. Then with a sad shake of the head and much impressiveness of voice he said:

"If I had only had a wife that I could have given the least iota of the praise that you have given yours my life to-day might have been—would have been, I am sure—one of success in place of failure; miserable, abject failure." He went on shaking his head in sad reflection still gazing into space.

"I tell you what, Langworth," he cried with vehemence, clenching his hands and looking up, "a

woman can make or break a man. Drag him down to the dogs! Yes, down, down to hell! to ruination!"

"A weak one," the other muttered to himself as he gazed at his companion. It was difficult for him to believe that a man could be so dragged down if his inclinations were not in that downward direction.

The visitor seemed to read some of these inward utterances and thoughts in the confronting countenance and for the time being he felt he hated and detested the man for his self-confidence and arrogated strength. This feeling departed, however, as speedily as it came, and he proceeded in his narrative.

"Well, Langworth, with that hundred you gave me I started East and returned to Des Moines where my wife was to make a start over again. I laid the money out in good clothes and some necessary things, procured a suite of fine apartments in a first-class section of the city, and put up my sign. Well, do you know"—he shook his head significantly at the other—"from that showing I made that woman got an idea that I had struck it rich in the West—made a big stake—and it was only a few days until she got around me all right and we were living together again. Nevertheless, she was not the only one that got the idea that I was on top again, for crowds of old acquaintances flocked about us in that fussy manner they will flock about those that are prosperous; crowds that wouldn't have looked at me if I had come back in a shabby coat and evidence of failure.

"I always talked of success, never of failure, and of what a glorious country the West was. It was all very effective. Friends and practice poured in

upon me and increased at a wonderful rate. Everybody seemed to help me up higher when I was up, the same as everybody will help to kick one down lower in the gutter if you are down, or going down. Well, I did fine for quite a while; and I would have continued doing so if it had not been for that woman.

"I stood her extravagance all right—and that was enough to break any man at any time—as there was plenty of money coming in from the high-class practice I had built up among the high-class society people of the town. But she was bound to break me as she had done before, and she did it in the same manner.

"You know, Langworth"—he looked interrogatively at the one addressed with a significant shake of the head, and his voice was lowered to a deep, confidential tone—"women will admire men—even ladies well born—if the men are pretty good looking and well built. And you know I'm not bad looking and well built when I am at my best, which I am not now. Well, to cut the matter short, it was the same old story. I think I told you something about a similar experience before. She got jealous, insulted women on the very street, raised the very devil in fact, for suspicion with her was equivalent to guilt, and broke me as she had done before. I struggled hard against it all to keep up my head, but all in vain. I went down, down, then drifted to other places, and here I am a broken man and all through that woman. Damn it all, Langworth," he cried as he shook his clenched fist with vehemence and his eyes glared with wrath, "I never had a chance with that woman! She's been my undoing always, my evil genius."

The host had had plenty of time during this

narrative to closely scrutinize the visitor, his general appearance and manner, and draw deductions therefrom regarding what kind of a man he was in character, reliability and whether he had advanced or retrograded in those qualities that stand for what is best in manhood since they had last met.

The scrutiny seemed to reveal many defects in both appearance and character, least of all was the well-worn, shabby suit of clothes he wore and the frayed and much soiled linen, for John Langworth was not the man to condemn or esteem one by the appearance of the clothes that covered him.

The visitor seemed to have noticed the scrutiny and divined some of the impression it made.

"Langworth, I am not very presentable," was his admission with an impressive shake of the head and a sweeping gesture of his two hands toward the one addressed.

"The fact is, I have nothing to make myself so with," he went on to explain as a long drawn out sigh indicative of much mental anguish broke from him. "I am broke, utterly broke, with not a dollar in my possession. I never was so low down before in all my life as I am now."

The one addressed made no comment, but rose from his seat, stepped into the other room and returned immediately with some paper currency in his hand, which amounted to fifty dollars, and tendered it to the visitor in as easy a manner as he could assume as he remarked:

"You will be able to rig yourself out with that and have something left to provide with while you are looking around and deciding what you will do." Then, looking at his watch, he said: "It is a wonder my wife is not home by this time. She'll soon

be here, I expect, then we'll soon have dinner. You are welcome to join us."

The visitor was profuse in his thanks, but declined the honor. He seemed in a great hurry to go all at once, attributing this haste to his present appearance. So the host did not attempt to detain him longer. In fact, he was pleased at his going after he had taken his departure. He felt, however, that he could hardly have done otherwise than ask him in the circumstances to stay.

CHAPTER XIV.

After Hilkley Tweedwell had taken his departure and the other was left to deep, undisturbed reflection about him, his appearance and the nature of his visit, which he now realized was primarily for financial assistance, he felt a relief that he was gone, and that he did not remain for the evening meal as invited to do. He could not rid himself of the feeling that there was contamination in his presence, at least in his family circle. He felt that it would have been all right to meet him elsewhere, but here where his wife and child was he preferred his absence. He wondered if the man would call again. He doubted very much whether he would do so when he recalled the fact of the previous assistance, financial and otherwise, that had been rendered, and the profuse expressions of gratitude and promises to pay back the financial obligation as soon as his affairs mended, which promises he seemed to have forgotten entirely when the change in his affairs came about, for he never even dropped a line of writing to his benefactor though an address in the West had been given him which would have carried any communication to the former.

Though John Langworth's reflective mind could discern little that was good in the man, and he was almost convinced of his utter selfishness and lack of redeeming traits of character, yet he failed to see how he could have done otherwise than he had done in rendering him assistance and offering him the hospitality of his home. It was what any one with the least feeling of sympathy for his kind

would have done in the circumstances for an old acquaintance in distress, he reasoned with himself. After arriving at this conclusion he dismissed the matter from his mind.

He had scarcely done this when his wife returned. She was cheerful in her manner but looked a little tired, and they sat together discussing the case she had attended as was sometimes their wont on these occasions after a professional visit on her part. Then he thought he would tell her of the recent caller.

"I had a visitor in your absence," he remarked in a careless manner. He rose from her side as he spoke and moved about the rom as was occasionally his custom when indulging in talk that was of little concern. "He is a medical man from the West," he went on in the same careless way, glancing occasionally at his wife; "an old acquaintance in fact, dating back so far as my brief abruptly ending college tuition in New York. He looked up this address thinking to locate Dr. Winngath, also an old friend of his, and he was surprised—exceedingly surprised—to meet me here instead and to learn about his other friend being no more."

The woman had listened at first with careless notice to the unfolding, but as her husband proceeded the carelessness gave way to a look of strained, set attention.

"We were just discussing the strangeness of the meeting after these years," the man went on, entirely ignorant of any change in the manner of his wife, "and remarking that we seemed to be destined to meet in unusual circumstances, for our previous meeting could not have been any more extraordinary than it was for we met that stormy night after the railway accident, I told you of,

sweeping down the river with the onrushing current and he was the very man I dragged to the shore, the man I had not seen for the previous ten years since I was a medical student in New York and he was a graduate in medicine. Hilkley Tweedwell is his name. I don't recall mentioning it to you. But you may have heard it from Winngath for he was on more intimate terms with him than I was. But you could not have met him as he left for the West about the same time as I did, the year before Winngath graduated.

"We—" the man was proceeding when he was arrested abruptly by the appearance of his wife.

"Why, Annetta! what's the matter?" he cried in alarm; then he sprang to her side where she rested upon the lounge. "You look ill."

The woman certainly did look anything but well. He would have noticed that fact a few moments sooner, when the change took place in her countenance if he had not been so intent on the story he was narrating.

The set, strained expression of countenance, with the half-closed eyes with which she had been regarding him as he proceeded in the unfolding about the visitor, changed suddenly to a look that might have bespoken alarm, dread or fear. The lines about her face seemed to deepen immediately, the color of youth gave place to a pallid hue, and the eyelids opened widely. She looked weak and faint as if the strength of life had forsaken her in an instant.

"You look ill," the man went on as he seized one of her hands while his other arm enfolded her and he gazed into her eyes anxiously. "Let me get something—some stimulant," he asked with eager solicitude. "You've overtaxed your strength. I

wish you wouldn't do it. I thought you looked tired when you came in. I wish you would give it all up, I do."

The woman made a weary gesture with her hand. "Never mind getting anything," she murmured. "It is only a passing weakness. I was not feeling very well. It will disappear immediately when I get a cup of tea and a little something to eat." She essayed a smile as she spoke and gazed into his face, but it was a weary, tired smile that confronted him.

"Perhaps it may seem a little selfish," she proceeded with a conciliating look and tone of utterance, "for me to follow my profession so closely. But it has become so much a part of my life and I love it so even though it does tire me occasionally.

"But I interrupted you, John," she said hurriedly, as if she had suddenly recalled a matter that had slipped her memory. "You were talking of that man, that acquaintance—that old acquaintance of yours. Is he calling again in the future, and—staying in the city?" As she asked these questions she turned her gaze away from his and looked across the room.

The husband shook his head dubiously.

"I do not know; it is hard to tell," he replied reflectively. His thoughts were suggesting to him that Hilkley Tweedwell was one of those acquaintances that look up friends only when they are in need of obligations and likely to get their needs supplied, and he would scarcely call again immediately with the same object in view. But he did not like to give utterance to his thoughts on the matter. He always refrained from belittling any one in the estimation of another if he could help it.

"The chances are that he will not call again. His

visits are likely to be much apart, years apart indeed." He could scarcely express a smile as he gave utterance to this and looked at his wife. "I made him welcome, however," he proceeded to explain. "I asked him to remain for dinner, and asked him to call again. I could not do otherwise in the circumstances. But he seemed in a great hurry all at once to be gone."

The manner of this explanation meant to be frank, but spoken somewhat hesitatingly awakened some questioning thought in his wife's mind.

"Is he a man apparently well to do or otherwise?" she asked with some apparent interest.

"He is oftener not well-to-do than otherwise," was the frank admission.

"And you assisted him, John?"

A nod of acquiescence and a steadfast look was the answer.

"And you assisted him previously?"

Another nod was the reply to this.

The woman did not comment on the matter, but became deeply reflective.

Then, after a few moments thought she said with animation and little weariness:

"Let us go to dinner, John. It must be ready by this time."

CHAPTER XV.

For the following few days John Langworth was moved to the utmost anxiety and perturbation of mind by the condition of his wife. She confined herself much to her room and seemed in a very bad state both mentally and physically. For a time the anxious husband feared a general breakdown. This, however, did not occur, and in the passing of a few days more she showed some improvement.

During this precarious and bad condition of the health of the mistress of the house Hilkley Tweedwell called. There was a great change in the man's appearance. He hardly looked like the same person garbed in a new stylish suit of clothes, freshly shaven and with new, immaculately clean linen. He would now have passed readily for the prosperous professional man in high standing, and would have quickly ingratiated himself into the favor of a big portion of the opposite sex, as he was wont to intimate by his talk that he was in the habit of not infrequently doing. And this was probably true and free from exaggeration for he was a man of fine carriage, physique and a certain manner of assurance that frequently goes a long way with the opposite sex.

"Gad, Langworth!" he exclaimed with a smiling countenance as he smote the one addressed familiarly on the back with the flat of his hand. "Gad! but it makes a world of difference to a man when he's got his body well clothed, his stomach well filled with good food, and a liberal supply of the currency of the realm in his pocket. With all this

he not only has a good opinion of himself, but nearly everybody else has an excellent opinion of him, too. Men will respect and reverence him, women will adore and worship him; but without all these, and with the same body and brains, he feels like a dog, and is treated like a dog and often much worse."

The host smiled good-humoredly to what was said. He felt in better spirits this afternoon than he had been for some days for his wife was showing a considerable improvement to what she had shown since she had been unwell. He felt pleasure and satisfaction at seeing so great an improvement in the appearance of the visitor from the previous meeting.

"Yes, it is an obvious fact," he said with a smile after they had seated themselves, "that these auxiliaries to man, clothes, money and food are playing as important a part as ever, if not more, in the economy of things, and are as important if not more important than man himself. In many respects we remain as much the animal as ever. Not only do our individual desires and instincts keep us so, but the instincts of our surrounding fellows do the same. The coat may not make the man, but it certainly helps considerably to do so."

"Especially the shoulder part of his anatomy," was the jocular rejoinder. "Some would not make nearly the showing nowadays if it were not for the coat and the auxiliary padding. And it's funny, too, in reference to clothes and present condition of things," he added with a laugh, "that one man works not at all and has a man help him change his clothes, while another man works hard and has no clothes to change." They both laughed heartily at this.

They went on in a similar light strain talking on other matters—their college days and their experiences in the West. Then the visitor took his leave promising to call again and expressing a hope he would have the pleasure of meeting the mistress of the house on the next visit and entirely recovered in health.

She had apparently recovered when he called again, which he did in a few days. She was out, however, at the time on some professional duty. He lengthened the duration of his call, far beyond his intended time of going, for the purpose of seeing her. The man felt a curiosity of considerable intensity to see the woman who had first been the wife of one of his medical companions and was now the wife of the other, and had herself adopted the profession of them both. He believed from his own judgment she must be a woman of far from the ordinary ability of the sex, and from what he had heard of her from her husband that belief was intensified in no inconsiderable degree.

Finally as he had begun to think he would have to abandon the idea of seeing her on this visit, as her return home was delayed so long and he did not like to make his stay so unusually protracted, she made her appearance.

After she entered the house she came in the room at the sound of her husband's voice making known his presence to her by calling her name. She held her gloves in her hand, of which she had been divesting herself, when her attention was drawn, and paused just within the doorway.

Both men rose as she entered—the husband to formally introduce her to the guest and the latter to receive the introduction.

There was a manner of modest pride about the

husband as he looked at his wife, then at the visitor, and simply said:

"My wife, Dr. Tweedwell."

The man bowed and so did the woman, though the former evidently expected a hand-clasp and was preparing to advance to receive it, but checked himself when no motion was made by the woman to offer her hand. The husband also noticed this omission, especially as she was wont to extend her hand in such circumstances wherein the one introduced was someone she had heard of before and not altogether a stranger. He was quick, however, to attribute this omission on her part to what little knowledge she had gleaned of the visitor's character from the brief conversation about him in which they had indulged the evening following his first call. She evidently thought he was hardly a proper person, was his deduction, and he could not help thinking she was right.

She showed some diffidence about advancing more than a step beyond the doorway entrance of the room, and what might have been taken as a lack of interest in the visitor for her gaze scarcely rested on the man when it sought her husband and she remarked to him about the manner in which she had passed the afternoon calling on several patients. This the husband also attributed to the same cause as the previous omission.

As she went on speaking the visitor's gaze was bent intently upon her drinking in every intonation of her voice, scanning the lineaments of face and form closely, noting the tallness of figure, the fine proportions of form, the darkness of eyes and hair and the fine regular features. Though her gaze was directed at her husband she seemed to be fully conscious of the intentness of the other's scrutiny

and she experienced a difficulty in concealing some awkwardness of deportment thereby. As she continued to address her husband, and the visitor continued to scrutinize her intently, she appeared to be under some strain, mental and physical. There was a tenseness about her and almost an attitude of defiance in poise of body and expression of countenance as she proceeded and drew herself up to her full height.

She was tall in a moderate sense though not extremely so. Her form was full with rounded curves, though far from heavy, and with that graceful litheness that rarely goes with a woman past thirty. As the summer evening sun filtered through the windows and lace curtains flooding the room with soft, golden light, her beauty of face and form was shown to the best advantage. Both men became observant of her beauty of person and were moved to admiration.

Her husband also noticed some strange, strained manner about her deportment.

"Annetta," he said with anxiety in his expression, "I think you're tired. You've been overdoing it again, I fear. I wish you would not. If you will not sit down, go and rest yourself. I'm sure you're tired.

"We'll excuse you—Dr. Tweedwell and I. He knows you've not been well; I told him that."

The visitor acquiesced in this, and the mistress of the house bowed, excused herself and left the room.

"I do not know what has come over my wife for some time past," the host explained, apologetically. "It is evident, however, that her health is not nearly what it was. She has been doing and trying to do too much. I wish she would give it all up—her

entire practice. There is no necessity for it. I admire and sympathize with her ambition, but I begin to think—am convinced, in fact—that it is injurious to her."

The one addressed nodded understandingly to all this, but there was a manner about him as if he was engrossed in some deep thought and oblivious to the import of much that was said to him. This he really was for the woman who had recently been in his presence was in his mind filling it to the exclusion of everything else.

He gave little thought about her deportment of reserve toward himself and her lack of notice of him, because he knew it was not uncommon for the sex to act in that way toward a stranger at first. It was the woman herself he was thinking about, and she was before him now as she was but a few minutes previously filling his mind's vision.

He had seen and known many fair women in his time, some of them fairer than the one he had just met, but none more interesting looking to him. He could see her as she stood in the shadows of the room just away from the golden evening light filtering softly within. He could see the proud, tense face and form, the latter drawn to its full height; the lips like the eyes full, proud and firm, yet with a wistful tenderness bespeaking a wonderful depth of feeling, human sympathy and love; the wide, smooth brow, crowned by the wealth of dark hair, telling of a superior mentality.

After a time the host noticed his visitor's preoccupation and he became meditatively silent, too. Thus they sat for a time till the one signified his intention of going, and took his departure.

CHAPTER XVI.

When Hilkley Tweedwell called again and failed in meeting with any reduction in the manner of reserve of the mistress of the house, that he had met on his first visit there, nevertheless this did not deter him from being just as assiduous in his calling; and though on subsequent visits there continued to be a similar deportment on her part toward him when they met, yet he continued to call just the same. If she was at home she was either busily engaged in some household duty or indisposed, and would make the briefest stay in his presence if called there by her husband, which happened on rare occasions; otherwise she would remain away. On the occasion when she was called there she would enter the reception-room with a courteous bow, pass a few remarks about the weather and withdraw.

A fixed expression of anxiety settled upon her countenance. At times when alone there was a haunted look of fear about her eyes, an apparent dread in her mind of impending danger that was about to fall.

Hilkley Tweedwell had never met her alone. This finally happened one day when her husband was absent.

The two maids happened to be busy and she answered the ring of the door-bell herself, as it was not uncommon for her to do, and as she opened the door she came face to face with the man for the first time without someone else being present. She had expected somebody else and there was an

awkward pause on her part for an instant as she stood with her hand on the door.

She had recovered, however, in an instant from the surprise, bowed courteously without offering her hand, held the door for the visitor to enter and closed it after he stepped within. Then with a remark on the nature of the weather she led the way to the reception-room and asked the visitor to be seated.

"My husband is out," she remarked in quiet tones of reserve as she paused after entering the room, and stood facing the one addressed but scarcely looking at him. "I was preparing to go out myself."

This latter fact was evident from her appearance for she wore a dark street costume, her toilet was attended to with extreme care, and apparently had just been completed. Altogether she looked very charming despite the manner of reserve she assumed and the settled anxiety and sorrow in her eyes as she stood with her two hands crossed in front of her facing the man but looking through the window without.

The visitor noted all this and was fully alive to all her beauty. He did not seat himself as requested, but stood facing her. He realized he could hardly prepare to stay after the latter explanation of the mistress of the house.

He had replied fittingly to her former remarks upon the nature of the weather as she preceded him into the room. Now when they came to a stand, and stood facing each other, his eyes scarcely left her countenance. He looked more grave than usual. There was now no evidence of his not uncommon jocular manner when meeting her husband. The fact was soon evident that there was

something on his mind, that he was going to say, which he hesitated about putting into words, and a considerable pause followed the woman's explanation of her husband's absence and her own intention of going out.

She evidently noted his deportment, as her glance at intervals swept his countenance, and was apprehensive of some unfolding on his part that she preferred not to hear, and her eyes narrowed considerably.

"I do not know when he will be back, she went on to explain more to break the apparent tension than for any other purpose. "You as a doctor must know that his movements are very uncertain." She made an effort to appear fully at ease, but she was evidently laboring under some considerable strain.

The man nodded understandingly. "Yes, I am fully conversant with that fact. However," he said, assuming a demeanor of indifference, "there was nothing particular about which I wished to see him. We have met so much lately and had so many talks of—of old times and things in general that the least meeting and the least talk with—with his interesting wife, whom I have seen so little of, would be, I am sure, a very desirable change and much appreciated if she is not too much engaged or too much in a hurry, which she generally is." He looked frankly at her as he spoke thus, and from his manner, which was of the blandest, it would have been difficult to realize that he intended what he said otherwise than as a mild compliment to the one addressed.

Nevertheless the woman regarded him doubtfully and seemed to be standing on her guard. If he had thought to thus break down the barrier of reserve in her he was disappointed. He was a

man, however, of much resourcefulness and perseverance where the opposite sex were concerned, as is generally the case with his stamp, and he proceeded with not only his usually apparent placidity of mind and unruffled exterior, but with added suavity:

"It is considerable of a rarity," he said slowly, reflectively eying her, "to meet with a woman of talents and attainments, and a rare combination of common sense with it all as well."

"Do you then think that it is so much rarer to meet with these in the one sex than in the other?" she asked quietly, without looking at the other. She had no sooner said this than she regretted her indiscretion in so doing. But it was a slip of the tongue. It seemed, after a moment's reflection, to be removing some of the barrier of reserve she wished to maintain against the man, and which he was evidently trying to break down, and she felt much annoyed with herself.

He did not reply immediately but looked away meditatively from her for a few moments. Here he realized an opportunity to conciliate her and further his own aim in not giving a direct answer and he seized upon it.

"Probably it is not so much rarer in the one sex than in the other after all if facts were known, because it is rare enough in both to be a wonder.

"However, we are apt to draw conclusions from our own experiences. From my own I might be led to believe that it is much of a rarity in your sex owing to my unfortunate experience with a woman to whom I was unfortunately bound in the ties of marriage; while your husband might take an entirely different view of the matter from his fortunate experience with a wife which has been

diametrically opposite to mine." His manner was extremely mild and placid as he spoke thus and eyed her intently to note the effect of his words.

To this exposition the woman remained perfectly neutral, showing neither approval nor disapproval by look, word or sign.

Though the result must have been disappointing to the man, nevertheless he was not discouraged but proceeded, his eyes rivetted upon her half averted face.

"Some men get women that are a continual help for betterment," he declaimed waxing more eloquent and dramatic in gesture and utterance as he proceeded, "an incentive to all that is ennobling, a guide that continually points the way and leads onward and upward to the highest ideals, that moves them to put forth great efforts in the achievement of lofty aims. The one I got possesses none of these qualities that move men for betterment and lofty aims. She is idle, extravagant, vain and frivolous. She cares for nobody but herself. Her own aim in life is to give nothing and take all, as is the manner of some of your sex. A man is expected to continually keep her in idleness, extravagance and luxury; in fact, provide for her every want and get no service from her in return. And," he added quietly, "I don't think that she is such a rarity by any means.

"It is to her I owe where I am to-day, the same as some men owe the position they occupy, away up the ladder, to their wives. I never had a chance with her, never a dog's chance. I wish to tell you this"—he lowered his voice to deep impressiveness —"so that you might change your idea of me if you have concluded that I am a wastrel or a man lacking character or ambition."

She did not reply, but maintained the same silence as heretofore. In fact, she showed in no way that she was interested in his unfolding. She might have been a statue for all the change of poise or expression of countenance she exhibited. She did not even rest her eyes upon the man for an instant but concentrated her gaze across the room looking into space. She might not even have heard for all the evidence she gave that she had.

The man had watched her closely. At last he appeared somewhat discomfited and felt much so. He had been so used to his eloquence and power of persuasion moving the opposite sex that now in all this unavailing effort he began to experience considerable annoyance. He bit his lips with some vexation, and a cold gleam came into his fishy-looking eyes for a moment, which was not pleasant to see, as he gazed at the immovable countenance and form of the woman. This manner, however, gave way immediately to an assumed complacency after a brief meditative silence.

"I thought," he said with some hesitancy and apparent diffidence as he moved uneasily upon his feet, "that you might not be uninterested to some extent—some little extent—in what concerns me so much."

She turned her eyes coldly upon him.

"Why should I be interested in your affairs?" she asked with calm, immovable countenance and subdued utterance, her posture unchanged in the least.

The man winced somewhat under her gaze.

"Why should you be interested?" he repeated.

Then he added, hesitatingly, and in some confusion:

"Why, I thought—that you might not be uninter-

ested to some extent in what concerns an old friend —an old acquaintance—of—of your husband and— and your—yourself." There was much hesitancy and some emphasis on the latter words.

The fact was now evident that the utterance had produced some emotion in the woman though she did not move her gaze nor her poise in the least. Her form, however, became more rigid and her countenance more tense. She seemed to be nerving herself for what was further coming as if some heavy blow, that she could not avert, was about to strike her.

The visitor noticed the change and proceeded:

"Of course you must have a memory," he said in quiet, impressive tones as he watched her narrowly; "a memory that can recall faces and incidents the same as another, as I myself, and know that we have met, you and I, before—before I met you here—here as you are now, in these surroundings."

The blow had fallen at last. It was what she had been expecting for some time, and what she had begun to look upon as almost inevitable and nerved herself to withstand, though at times she had entertained the hope that it might be averted or that there might be no reason to dread its fall. There was no agony depicted upon her countenance —the agony she felt. The anguish had worn itself deep into her heart gradually for weeks, eating into her very soul, too intense and too abysmal for easy discernment. Now at this unfolding it was but a little more poignant than before. There was no feeling on her part that she would like to cry out in her agony; give vent to that anguish she felt. The worst had come and she now knew where she stood.

The man was watching her closely, but could discern little change in her demeanor.

"You haven't forgotten, surely?" he asked. "You don't deny it. I recalled you and where I met you soon after I first saw you here," he went on, explaining hurriedly. "I was puzzled a little at first, but when I heard your name—the name Annetta—uttered by your husband, I thought awhile and remembered all; all and where and how I met you."

She did not deny it; she did not deny anything. From space, where her gaze had wandered at his unfolding, she merely turned her steadfast eyes upon him unflinchingly. As she gazed at him the eyes narrowed considerably looking through the nearly closed lids. It might have been a look of defiance; it might have been a look of one brought to bay; but it betokened no fear, no particle of fear as it met his own.

Her breast heaved tumultuously and her breath came hard and fast as she gazed at him thus in silence for a few moments her hands clasping and unclasping the while; then she spoke.

"And is this what you called so often for?" she asked in constrained tones in which her great effort at self-control was clearly visible. "Did you call so frequently to find an opportunity in my husband's absence to acquaint me with the knowledge that you knew that we had met before?" There was now unmistakable defiance in her eyes and scorn in her voice.

The man winced under it all. "I could not refer to the matter in his presence," he protested with a deprecative gesture of his hand and a shake of the head.

This was evidently a telling stroke and the woman felt it much. She realized the truth of what

he said and was silent, silent and rigid as her gaze dropped.

"And—and you felt it your duty to acquaint me of it at the first opportunity?" she asked after a brief silence with some visible agitation in her voice; "acquaint me that you possessed a knowledge that we had previously met in a meeting you could not refer to in my husband's presence?"

"I believe you knew of it, as I did, and that the knowledge was mutual and consequently I thought a reference to it would not do any harm."

This was uttered in a mild, defensive tone; then he proceeded with warmth: "Why, my dear woman," he cried, "I would not willingly hurt your feelings or pain you in any manner for the world. I have the utmost admiration and respect for you. If I had only had a wife like you," he went on with increasing ardor, "my life would have been entirely different. In place of a failure, I would have been a success as your husband has been.

"You are a woman who would elevate any man in aspiration and ideal—elevate and inspire him to any attainment and possible goal in life that could be reached."

The one addressed was silent. The praise, lavish praise bestowed, that would have warmed the man's way into many a woman's good graces, if not into her heart, fell upon unresponsive material. It was unappreciated and barren of the desired results. Censure or praise from the same source would have been alike in result in this instance.

"And what is your aim—object—in acquainting me of all this—the knowledge that we had met before?" she asked in cold, deliberate tones; "and that you were aware of it." Her eyes pierced him through and through as if to discern his purpose.

"You must have some object in this," she went on eyeing him dubiously, suspiciously. "Men generally have an object—a selfish object—where they exert themselves, and especially where women are concerned."

The man shook his head deprecatingly at this imputation. "I wanted to set your mind at rest," he said in assuring tones; "dispel the doubts you may have entertained about me, which I thought you did by your manner; let you know that you have a friend in me—a friend you could trust; that was all." He put forth a grand effort to make this convincing by look, intonation of voice and emphasis of hand and head; and in his supreme egotism believed he had succeeded well when the woman remained silent and withdrew her gaze from his countenance and her eyes sought the floor.

From his experience with women, and his had been considerable, he had been led to the conviction that there was nothing so telling in gaining her favor as a liberal bestowal of flattery without overdoing it, and a bountiful declamation of protestations of interest and regard in her welfare, no matter how adversely constructible this might be to the logical thinking mind. The logical aspect of the matter never entered into his consideration for he possessed a strong conviction that logic was an unknown quality with the sex and entirely beyond their grasp of mind.

Now, with the belief well established in his mind, that he had succeeded fairishly, satisfactorily for the time being, he thought he would take his departure, and he immediately signified his intention of going, blandly excusing himself at the same time for taking up the other's time as he had done.

"Mind," he said with an assuring look and gest-

ure at leaving, as he backed toward the door with a reverential bow, "mind, you have a friend in me —a friend, a friend you can trust."

The woman did not reply by word, nor look.

Her gaze simply searched his countenance calmly as she listened, and the same look followed his departing figure, without a word or move, as he turned and stepped away. Even after he was gone she stood immovable like a statue for some time.

He was not at all discomfited. He simply muttered to himself as he strode away from the house: "Better next time."

CHAPTER XVII.

It was considerable time before Hilkley Tweedwell succeeded again in meeting the mistress of the house alone. He called several times without getting even a glimpse of her. On these occasions he was received by the husband and by him entertained. Or if one or both of the heads of the house were absent, or one absent and the other indisposed, as was the case occasionally, he was met and informed of this by the maid and seldom waited.

When he called and was received by the master he was avoided assiduously by the mistress. In fact the latter had taken even to avoiding her husband much to his perplexity and trouble of mind.

The sum of money Hilkley Tweedwell had received on his first visit had been augmented by several other liberal sums when each amount had been exhausted. The man had shown but little diffidence in letting his wants be known when it was money. He was profuse in his declarations, however, that he would liquidate the obligations at the earliest possible opportunity.

John Langworth's manner at these declarations showed no evidence whether he was concerned or not about the sums of money he was letting slip through his fingers. The fact was, he did not care. He possessed much more than was ample for his own and his family's needs, and money was the last thing in the world that gave him deep concern, for parsimony and greed were entirely alien to his nature.

Finally, one day the persistent caller succeeded in coming face to face with the person he was desirous of seeing. The mistress of the house was in the act of opening the front door and bidding good-by to a visitor when he reached the spot. He was elated at the opportunity thus offered for a meeting and realized with satisfaction that she could scarcely deny him an interview in the circumstances.

The woman did not show any evidence of chagrin at his appearance. She simply met him with a cold, formal bow as she held the door for him to enter. He made some movement as if he was extending his hand in greeting, but there was no responsive movement on her part.

When they reached the reception-room she bade him be seated and stood facing him, but made no movement to seat herself. He asked about her husband, who was absent from home, and inquired solicitously about her own health. To all of his questions he received but the same cold, formal responses. He did not greatly mind this manner of the other, for he believed that it was to a great extent but an exhibition of the natural coyness of the sex that a little more familiarity and perseverance would break through.

He possessed unbounded confidence in himself in his ability to ultimately win his way into the good graces of any member of the sex. The few rebuffs he had met in his time had found but the briefest lodgment in his memory. The man's colossal vanity now led him on in the conquest on which he had set his heart and mind.

He had told himself time and time again that there were two principal ways of winning a woman, and two only, that were of any account and

worth considering. The one and the first was to win her with gentle guile; the other was to win her with a considerable show of that aggressive force which was much akin to that used by primitive man except lacking any of the physical violence.

If she did not succumb to the former method she most assuredly would to the other, he had been wont to conclude, for he believed that the old instinctive admiration of the sex for masterly brute strength and domination in the other sex, inherited by subordination of position throughout the ages, was too strongly enrooted in her being to be ineffective. He now concluded that he would put the former method into operation, and if it proved lacking of desired results, he would ultimately inject the spirit of the latter.

The visitor seated himself in a large, easy chair facing the woman and let his admiring gaze rest upon her in silence for a few moments. There was nothing extraordinary in this as any man who was wont to admire physical beauty might have done the same, for her face and form were well-nigh perfection and calculated to awaken some admiration. Besides, despite the settled expression of care and anxiety upon her countenance, there was a grace of intellectual charm about it with her dignity of manner that gave an interest to her appearance far beyond that evoked alone by mere physical charm. There was something, however, in the gaze that made the woman shrink from it and her deportment of reserve was intensified.

Finally the man spoke and his manner of gaze changed. He assumed a look of deep earnestness as in mild, thoughtful tones he said: "I was thinking now what a wonderful charm there is about a

graceful, intellectual woman—a woman that has infinitely more to commend her than mere physical charms; how she lends an indescribable attractiveness to all her surroundings—an attractiveness that cannot otherwise be found."

Despite the lack of any boldness about the man's gaze and tone, that deprived the utterance of any offensiveness which otherwise might have been felt, nevertheless, the woman colored somewhat and moved uneasily while her gaze sought distant objects. The former misunderstood this for fitting modesty called forth by his remarks, and believing he had disarmed suspicion and was gaining ground he proceeded in the same manner and said:

"Not only does she lend this attractiveness to her inanimate surroundings, but she inspires those with whom she comes in contact with a desire for high attainments and aspirations.

"I have to confess," he went on with added gravity of voice and look, "to being much imbued lately with such desires and aspirations—desires and aspirations to be doing as I have never felt before. I feel that I ought to be doing great things, and could be doing them." He believed it wise not to make the flattery too personal

The woman experienced more embarrassment at this later unfolding and showed some of her feeling in her bearing which she could not wholly disguise despite her efforts. She was not deceived in him, however. She formed a true estimate of the worth of his slightly disguised but palpable flattery and wondered if he really took all women for fools, unreasoning fools.

Her silence and deportment encouraged him in his unbounded egotism to believe he was succeed-

ing well and to venture further. He bent a gaze of intense ardor upon her.

"My God!" he exclaimed with vehemence, "how I have envied Langworth, envied him his great good fortune in his priceless possession of—of a superior woman. What could I not have done if I had been so blessed instead of being cursed as I have been? Yes, cursed!" he added with increased emphasis and vehemence, "with a woman whose influence and conduct has been stunting and—"

"Pardon me," interrupted the woman coldly.

"Pardon me," she went on, her piercing gaze resting on the one addressed and her eyes and utterance bespeaking scorn, "I must be going. I have much to attend to. Besides"—she eyed him in silence for an instant and drew herself up to her full height—"this is hardly a subject to discuss to me in my husband's absence. I do not desire to hear it, and I am sure my husband would not approve of it." There was an impressive tone of quiet decision about her utterance, and a dignity about her bearing that left no doubt in the listener's mind of the meaning of her words and the finality of her decision.

A change passed over the man's countenance. The expression of intense ardor that had been there when he gave vent to his interrupted vehement outburst was replaced by one of much annoyance and injured vanity. He was evidently angry, very angry, for the time being at least, and unable to conceal the state of his feelings though he made a futile effort to do so.

He looked at the woman coldly for a few moments from where he sat without breaking the silence. Then he spoke, betraying some impatience and irritation:

"Your husband would not approve of it," he repeated, his well-shaped brows knitting.

"Your husband would not approve of the subject I was discussing." He rose to his feet as he spoke drawing himself up to his full height, the magnificent height of fully six feet of well-developed manhood that had found favor in the eyes of so many of the opposite sex. He not only experienced a feeling of superiority in this position to sitting, but felt he looked considerably more imposing to others, and to much more advantage and much more awe-inspiring.

"Well, what if he does not?" he asked inquiringly as he took a step nearer the woman.

"What if he does not?" he repeated with added force and a growing confidence in his position, "I knew you before he did. Did I not?"

The woman drew herself up to her full height also. Defiantly she confronted him with flashing eyes and clenched hands.

"You met me before he did; that was all. Does that give you any right over me to force your presence upon me—your unwelcome presence?" There was much indignation marked on her countenance, and much contempt in her utterance.

The man shrank before her scornful gaze and indignant words, some sense of his utter contemptibleness dawning upon him.

But his natural effrontery and callous indifference to right and wrong possessed him immediately, and with his overweening belief of his power of attraction and power of conquest of the sex his gaze boldly met the woman's.

"You ask what right, what right have I over you," he went on unabashed, executing a broad, sweeping gesture of the hand and raising his eye-

brows inquiringly. "I might ask alike what is right, the right so-called, that would forbid and condemn my actions, subordinate the impulses of my heart, enslave the deepest and humanest of passions to its enthralment, stifle to convention that which is moving and possessing my entire being? Why, it is nothing more than a term, a mere term, meaning a condition established by man often for his own selfishness and the enslavement of others, the enslavement of much that will not be enslaved.

"That which is distinguished as right and wrong," he went on after a pause, growing in warmth as he proceeded, his eyes glittering banefully, "is often understood so simply from conditions and different understandings. One will see it different from another, the same as I may see it different from you, and which I do. What is a term, a mere word to me, with my feelings?" he asked in constrained impassioned tones. "Why, nothing!" he added. "My God, woman! you might have been mine by the same right that gave you to another. That mere chance and nothing more.

"And why should I not admire you and seek your presence?"

There was an unusual vehemence in the latter utterance, and a boldness in his manner and gaze that made the woman shrink from him in some fear for the instant.

Then realizing the full depth of his baseness, her womanly indignation rose to its highest and with it a fearlessness of the man and a disregard of what consequences her action might bring about if he determined to wreak his vengeance upon her, she confronted him with flaming eyes.

"You had better leave my presence!" she cried in impassioned tones, her voice as well as her body

quivering with indignation. "Your are insulting me as well as my husband, and I will not listen any longer. I will tell him of—of your conduct if there is any more of it."

The man drew near to her with a mocking expression on his face. "You will not tell him," he replied, lowering his voice impressively till it was scarcely audible. "I know you will not." He shook his head, thrust his face near to her and smiled mockingly into her countenance.

"Why not?" she had scarcely strength to ask the question, a weakness came over her so suddenly, her limbs bending and shaking beneath her weight as the man's visage nearly touched her own. "John will believe me because he loves me," she went on tremblingly. "I know he will. I'm sure he will."

"And he would believe me, too," was the rejoinder, "believe me, too," he added with confidence, "when I brought some facts to his notice. Oh, no! you will not tell him; I know you will not." He moved toward the door as he spoke. Then turning he said with a smile. "I will call again in a few days when you are feeling better; you are not feeling well to-day. Tell John that I called and inquired for him; that is all. Be wise and do not do anything that you are likely to sadly regret, for John, you know, though not a bad sort of a fellow, is an awful straight-laced Puritan, and got some very straight-laced notions. You ought to be able to recall an incident of that, the first night we all met."

The woman did not reply, but looked after him mechanically as if in a dream as he passed out of the door. Then a moan bespeaking anguish, anguish unutterable, burst from her lips.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN John Langworth returned home he was not informed by his wife of the nature of the recent meeting between her and the visitor. The woman felt an utter helplessness about doing that which she had threatened. She knew in her heart that her utterance had been more in the nature of a threat than an intention. As the days passed she felt more and more an impotency to act the part she believed to be her duty in the circumstances.

"Oh, John, John," she murmured in her agony when she thought of the situation, and her utter helplessness, "I don't want to deceive you in the least, but I cannot, cannot help it, I cannot help it. I ought to confide in you, I know, but I cannot in this matter."

She dreaded to meet Hilkley Tweedwell, and though she knew she could refuse to see him again, and openly defy him in place of avoiding him as she had been doing, yet she dreaded doing so for the possible consequences involved. She shunned her husband more and more continually. She dreaded meeting him, and she dreaded what the next few days might bring forth. She dreaded the other man's next visit, and yet there were times in her despair when she would have welcomed it to know the worst.

Finally Hilkley Tweedwell called. The time of day was earlier than usual. The fact was evident that he had chosen the hour so as to avoid her husband who usually made his round of professional calls at that part of the day. His request to see

the mistress of the house, when he presented himself at the door and learned from the maid that the master was absent, was in the nature of a demand.

"Tell your mistress that I want to see her; that I must see her," was his peremptory order. The servant delivered the message word for word, believing it was meant in the nature of a summons for medical service or advice.

The man felt some elation when it speedily brought a response in the appearance of the one he desired to see. The method of primitive man's wooing was telling in the way of victory he told himself with satisfaction.

He greeted the woman, however, with a deferential bow and the suavest good-morning. Now he believed he had let her know that he was a man of set will, strong in purpose and not to be trifled with, it was time to show the conciliatory spirit and encourage her to meet him half way in the same manner. It seemed to him that she was going to do this for she appeared much more humble and broken in spirit than on the previous meeting.

She returned his bow with a slight inclination of the head, which was a considerable concession in comparison to her previous cold, rigid meeting and hostile leave taking of him.

"You are looking much better," he remarked with a considerable show of earnestness. It would have been difficult to know on what evidence he based his deductions for she appeared in anything but a healthful and cheerful state of mind and body. There was a general spiritless, listless, tired, languid manner and expression about her. Much of the lustre had departed from her once clear, liquid eyes, and beneath them dark rings had formed bespeak-

ing sleepless nights and mind-troubled days. Her cheeks were pale with the paleness of the lily, brought on by anguish of mind rather than that wanness resultant of ill health. She carried herself with little of the supple grace and erect poise of body of heretofore, even though she made some effort. Nevertheless, despite all this there was a beauty of person and an ethereal attractiveness about her from which no untoward happenings could detract or dim.

Some realization of the man's shallow artifice at his remarks on her appearance brought a faint bitter smile, a pitiful fraction of a smile, to her lips. It could have been scarcely noticed, however, as it was gone in an instant.

"The man is an arrant fool, an utter vain, senseless ass as well as a knave," she muttered inaudibly to herself. "He takes me to be an utter fool, a brainless fool as well."

She took a step or two nearer him, where her scrutinizing gaze could reach him better

"So you demanded my presence here," she said, "gave orders to my maid that you must see me." There was a little of the old spirit of defiance in the tone of utterance, the poise of body and the flash of the eye as she spoke thus and looked the visitor in the face.

The one addressed shook his head slowly and executed one of his sweeping deprecative gestures of the hand. "Not at all, my dear woman," he protested with deep emphasis on his words. "You mistake, greatly mistake my meaning," he went on in the same manner. "I was simply very desirous of seeing you, and may in my exceeding great desire have been a little more than—than exactly formal in putting my request; making my desire

known. You know"—he consulted her with a questioning look and his voice sank to a deep tenderness when he proceeded—"it is not in the province of a humble subject, where sovereign beauty holds sway, to command or demand, but to request, humbly request. This I intended doing, but my ardour, zeal for the one who has enslaved me, and whom I would humbly serve and request so little in return—just a little kindness—of so much of which she has to give, got the better of me. For this I humbly beg forgiveness, for when we're only mortals it is difficult to control all our mortal weaknesses, especially if that particular weakness is a very strong one, firmly, deeply lodged in every corner of our being, heart and soul, its conquering, consuming potency outweighing all our poor reasonings, the strongest weakness that has swayed man from the beginning of time, and the strongest that will sway him till the end of all things on this terrestrial globe."

As he spoke his eyes greedily snakelike had watched the woman closely to note the effect of his words—the changing expressions of her face, the heaving of her full bosom, now tumultuous, now gentle, the eyes now softening, now gleaming banefully, the lids narrowing with suspicion and opening unguardedly, the movements of the hands clenching and relaxing, the poise of the figure now firm and tense, now bending and yielding.

He had put forth a supreme effort in bending the woman to his will, and believing he was succeeding, he stepped forward to clasp her hand. But if he had been less successful with women he would have noticed the ominous gleam in the eyes and the determined set of the jaw as he moved to execute his design.

She saw his intention and drew herself up proudly, coldly regarding him with a look of withering scorn, which manner discomfited him for the time being and he drew back.

She was thinking how easy it would be to deal with him if she were a man, big and strong like her husband, who though scarcely so tall and so heavily built, could, she felt sure, more than match him in strength and pitch him into the street, which she knew he would do very quickly if he were present and learned of the other's conduct.

"Still a little coy," he muttered to himself, feeling somewhat discomfited for a moment. Then his colossal self-confidence returned to him immediately. "But it is the way of some of the sex," was his consoling reflection as he drew back. "I'll have to use more patience. I've been a little too abrupt. Women are not exactly all alike, though very nearly so. Some require a little more manœuvering." Then he said aloud to her: "I fear I have offended again. I had no intention of so doing. Pardon me, it was my usual ardour."

"Offended!" The woman's voice was shrill with passion and indignation as she repeated the word. "Offended," she went on, regarding him with flashing eyes; "why you've ——"

She was going to say that he had outraged and insulted her and her husband and desecrated their home by his cowardly conduct and presence. But realizing the utter helplessness of her position she became abruptly silent.

The man took the silence as a desire to conciliate him at the realization of the power he held over her, and his low animal cunning and cowardly nature reasserted themselves immediately.

"I hope I have not offended so grievously," he

said in his blandest manner; "and I hope you were not going to say something very unkind to me. For you know kindness begets kindness. I would not want to be anything but kind to you. I don't believe I really could be without great provocation, and I don't think you will give me that provocation." There was a significance in his look and a significance in his tone as he gave voice to this latter utterance. Then he proceeded, eyeing her narrowly and said: "If one confers favors the other generally repays or is expected to repay. You can depend upon the favor of my silence about a certain matter if you will, but be kind, just a little kind."

The woman was intently following him in his unfolding, descrying, discerning, digesting the sinister import of his words, fully alive to the hidden depth of his meaning, standing like an animal at bay, her lids narrowed as she regarded him till her eyes were but two narrow openings gazing forth when she turned her gaze suddenly toward the window looking forth and an exclamation escaped her.

"Why, John, my John!" she cried gladly, eagerly with partly outstretched hands. Then checking herself as the man's gaze followed her own to the figure approaching the house up the garden path, she slowly left the reception room by the folding doors into the next apartment as a long sigh, half moan of anguish escaped her, and the front door opened and her husband entered the house and the room just vacated by her and occupied by the visitor.

"Why, Langworth!" exclaimed the other in cheery, bland tones as he stepped forward with outstretched hand, "this is indeed a busy world, a world of humans as busy as bees. I am here alone,

your wife too busy to give to me more than a moment or two of her company. And by gad, I don't feel like taking more of it when I realize how precious it must be. Now I see you look as if you were just as busy as she, flitting from one place to another, I judge from the hasty manner in which you came up to the house and entered. I begin to feel out of place and much of a drone among you." He smiled good-naturedly without a particle of embarrassment or restraint as he looked blandly into the countenance of the other.

John Langworth smiled in return as he took the proffered hand and listened to the man's hurried jocular utterance.

"Why," he said as he went on smiling good-naturedly at the visitor, "you must not mind us two. We're not really so busy as we appear to be. We are like a good many more, we make quite a little fuss about what little we do. It is just our way and nature to be busy and we can't help being so as we are, busy, apparently, busy, all the time." And he went on smiling.

Then they talked of general things, the visitor showing not the least evidence of any embarrassment which might have been expected in the circumstances. In fact, the master of the house appeared less at ease than the other.

He was somewhat restless, and rose occasionally, pacing backward and forward across the floor as he spoke and answered his companion.

Finally, the visitor took his departure. He had no sooner passed out of the door when the other sought his wife, whom he found in her room on the floor above which adjoined his own apartment on the one side and the child's bed and play room on the other.

She was sitting on a lounge facing a window that looked out across some stretch of grass, trees and foliage to the broad, shining bosom of the lake, sparkling in the clear warm sunshine. But her face was buried in her hands as he entered and she was apparently unaware of his presence. She might have been sleeping or in deep troubled thought as she thus sat in a recumbent manner, her elbows resting on her knees.

The husband watched her for a few moments after he stepped within the partly open doorway, and the expression of anxiety that had previously marked his countenance gave way to a look of deep pain and concern. He stepped quietly to the lounge where she sat, sank upon it by her side and passed his arm about her protectingly with gentle concern. For an instant there was some startled fear about her as her hands fell from her face, her eyes opened and she looked up into the troubled countenance gazing into her own. Then with the realization of the stupendous love and protecting security of the arms that held her, her head sank upon the breast of the man as the head of a weary child might have done, and she closed her eyes in repose.

After a few moments' silence, the husband spoke as he held her thus:

"Annetta, I came home earlier than usual," he murmured in scarcely audible tones, as if she might be sleeping and he did not wish to disturb her, "because I was troubled somehow all morning about you, fearful lest you might not be well, or that something had happened."

She opened her eyes and looked at him searchingly.

"You know, Annetta," he went on apologetically, "there are times such fears, groundless fears,

for those near and dear to us will assail us despite all our efforts to banish them."

The woman did not answer him. Her heart was too full, too overflowing, of love and gratitude for utterance. She gazed into his eyes silently, bespeaking all that which she felt till her eyes were too dim with tears to further see and she turned her face away.

"I heard you come—saw you come," she explained brokenly in low tones, a sob escaping her, "and I was so glad for I was so troubled—sorely troubled in—in mind and body. I have not been well lately, John."

"You will be better soon," he said with an effort at cheerfulness he did not feel. "You've been doing too much lately, working too hard, as I told you long ago you were doing, and ought to give it up."

"Perhaps I will be better soon," she replied. "If I could rest I would be I am sure. Perhaps I will be able to rest better before long, and my nerves will be quietened, for they trouble me so much."

The man's compassionate eyes melted and softened to added tenderness at her words as he gazed upon her countenance.

"I hope so. I pray you will," he said with much fervency.

Then in silence they sat thus for a time, and as the silence deep and thoughtful for both continued unbroken the eyes of each at the same time sought the window and gazed across the confronting landscape to the broad expanse of lake, the bosom of which now shone and sparkled in the unobstructed midday sunshine like a huge glistening mirror.

Then the man moved reluctantly as if to rise.

"I will have to be going," he said with regret in

his tones and a tender wistfulness in his gaze as he bent it upon the countenance and sad eyes that turned to meet his own.

"I have some important matters to attend to." He kissed her tenderly as he concluded and rose to attend to these matters.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next day when the husband left home for his professional rounds his wife was in the deepest thought for a considerable time.

She seemed to be determining a matter that caused her much deliberation and was fraught with momentous consequences. She sat in her bedroom absorbed in it, her dark brows contracted, her eyes narrowed, her chin resting in the hollow of her hand, gazing out at the clear bright sunshine dancing on the rippling bosom of the lake, but seeing little of what confronted her without. A scene mirrored on her mental vision, conjured up by her engrossed thoughts, was before her vividly. It moved her to various emotions showing their intensity upon her mobile lineaments.

As she sat with her eyes narrowed and her brows contracted, her bosom would heave tumultuously, her breath come hard and fast, her hand by her side clinch tightly and her lips compress till their bow-like fullness became a thin straight line. Anon she would sit with the calm immobility of a marble statue, her bosom still, her breath silent, her brow smooth, her eyes wide and placid and her lips soft and tender. She had been gazing on the water for a considerable time oblivious of what she was looking at, blind to the beauty of all her surroundings and her confronting view, seeing nothing but the one absorbing matter that engrossed her mind to the exclusion of everything else. Finally, as she sat thus the outlines of a distant steamboat reached the range of her vision without her moving her gaze

and the sight of it diverted her attention from the matter in her mind to the reality and beauty of the confronting scene.

She gazed upon it taking in all its beauty as she had often done before. She saw the stretch of green grass and foliage reaching to the margin of the lake, the wide range of water shining and sparkling in the clear sunshine, the great blue-gray dome of heaven with its deep crown of azure in the zenith melting away gradually in the distance till it met the far-off horizon in a gray streak of haze. As she continued to gaze upon it she recalled the graduation day of her husband and the delightful sail they had together out upon the great bosom of water when they were both so free from care, and as she did so her face softened wonderfully and her eyes became moist and dim.

They had occasionally indulged in a similar trip since, but none of them had left the impression upon her that the first had done.

"Oh, John! my John," she exclaimed, "if we had but remained friends, comrades, companions, as we were that day, and as I desired we should remain, or even lovers, for I would not have repulsed your love because I loved you so, then I could have told you all now, confided in you with the assurance that you would not think any the less of me. But I was weak, so very weak, in loving you, that I could deny you nothing, and you had your way against my wish and forebodings." She shook her head in sad contemplation and a few silent tears bedimmed her eyes and coursed down her cheeks.

In a few moments, however, this weakness had passed away. She dried her eyes and was apparently the strong woman again. The tender recalling seemed to give her strength, strength of pur-

pose to carry out the design that she had been formulating in her mind to meet the danger that was threatening and encompassing her. In an instant more her mind was made up and her determination taken.

She rose from the seat she had been occupying and drew herself up to her full height as she looked out the window again and upon the fair scene confronting her. The view seemed to inspire her with added determination. There was little evidence now of the weak, nerveless woman brought to bay, in her countenance or poise of body. Strength and determination marked her face and bearing.

She moved from the room with a firm quick step to her husband's sleeping apartment and delving into one of the bureau drawers withdrew a shining revolver of medium-sized calibre. It was a weapon her husband had been wont to carry occasionally when he was called out at late hours of the night. The one that had been his companion during his life in the West was much larger and had been laid away for some years. She looked at it first with some dread as she examined it carefully to ascertain if it was fully loaded. Then realizing fully what potency lay in it for aiding her in her design she gazed upon it with some affection, mingled with awe. This awe disappeared entirely as she thought of how it had been her husband's protector from danger on many an occasion, and how it was to protect both him and herself now, for the danger that menaced her menaced him equally; and she raised it and folded it to her breast as a mother might affectionately fold her babe.

"Yes, kindness begets kindness," she muttered darkly, her brows contracting ominously. "It is by conferring favors that we get favors in return.

Oh, yes; I will repay; I will repay, indeed," she cried, and she laughed bitterly, ironically as she recalled the words and manner of the man and his apparent self-confidence in the belief of the power he held over her.

"So I can depend upon his silence if I am kind," she went on in the same ironical manner. "Oh, I will be kind; yes, I will be kind; and he will be silent indeed with a silence that will be sure—sure and lasting; and you'll never injure John and me; I'll make sure of that."

She fumbled in the folds of her dress as she spoke, locating a small pocket and placed the instrument within. Then in silence she straightened herself up, surveyed her dress with satisfaction, realizing there was no visible evidence of the weapon, and withdrew it and replaced it in the bureau.

As she walked away to attend to some household matters she appeared as if a weighty load had been lifted from her mind. Her appearance seemed also to lift a load off her husband's mind when he returned. He thought he had not seen her looking so well for quite a while, and he was even moved to joke with her as of old, and playfully chide her occasionally.

As the days passed the manner of the woman never changed and the resolution formulated by her never weakened. There were occasions, however, when some expression of dread overcast her countenance when the door-bell rang, but in an instant it gave way to a look of determination she felt possessed her to meet the impending crisis. Time and time again when she heard the door-bell ring and she listened with fast beating heart for the sound of a voice that would acquaint her that the momentous time for action had arrived was she disil-

lusioned and the realization of a further respite from action brought no change in her demeanor, no evidence of relief or disappointment did she show. There were occasions, however, when she felt she would welcome the meeting that was to bring about the end and terminate the suspense that she feared might possibly weaken her somewhat in her resolution if the suspense lasted long.

Occasionally, as days passed and the man did not come she wondered if he could have gone away never to darken her door again. There was a possibility in this for he might not be so entirely inhuman and devoid of manhood and pity as he seemed. It appeared at first too good for possibility, but as the duration of time since his previous visit widened beyond any similar period of his absence, the possibility of its likelihood became more apparent. Nevertheless, she did not build her mind up on this for she had formulated a philosophy to the effect that it is best to look for the worst while hoping for the best, for the worst will most likely happen.

In this she was not mistaken for one day at the usual early part of the forenoon when her husband was absent as was his custom the familiar doorbell rang and as she listened from the top of the stairway she heard the well-known voice of Hilkley Tweedwell inquiring of the maid if either the mistress or the master of the house was at home, and the reply that the former was. Then as she heard her name and the man's answer that he wished to see her she realized that the time for action had come, the hour when she would rid herself of the menace to the continued peace of her home and the endangerment to the lasting love of her husband.

She returned to her room and attended briefly to finishing her toilet. When she had accomplished this she looked out at the lake which showed dull and leaden under a threatening sky of black and gray clouds. The elements had been threatening all the morning. The sun had made some early but ineffectual attempts at shining, the rain at descending and the wind at blowing. But, after a few faint sickly beams of the former had reached the earth, and a few drops of rain had pattered down upon the foliage and ground for a few moments accompanied by an abortive attempt of the wind to stir the foliage and the dust of the road they all seemed if they were content to remain quiescent for the time being.

The woman stood a few minutes gazing out the window, but seeing little confronting her. Her mind was on the one engrossing subject, the coming interview with the visitor. As she stood looking out the sound of the outside world came faintly to her ears. She heard the noise of distant traffic and the chirping of the nearby feathered tribe; and fainter still were the inclosed sounds of domesticity—the audibility of the housemaids going about their daily duties and the prattle of the child amid her playthings.

The latter sound caught the woman's ears holding her attention for a time during which her face softened wonderfully and she murmured some inaudible endearing words. Then stifling her woman's feelings she hurriedly left the room, sought her husband's apartment, slipped the little shining instrument within the folds of her dress and began her descent of the stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

As the mistress of the house descended the stairway to meet the visitor there was little in her appearance and manner betokening that the meeting about to take place was fraught with more than ordinary importance, and in the nature of a crisis in her affairs.

Her heart beat but a little faster than was its wont, her eyes were but a trifle brighter than usual, her mouth somewhat more firmly set and her breath came and went with slightly increased rapidity. Otherwise she might have been bent on an ordinary everyday interview. About her as she moved along was much evidence of self-control and quiet dignity of bearing.

When she reached the reception room and the man's presence she merely inclined her head slightly in a careless manner to his salutation of good morning and his low deferential bow. She scarcely seemed to look at him, almost entirely ignored his presence as she gazed about the apartment and out the curtain-shaded window, toward which she slowly moved, through which the dim light of the dull day filtered, casting dun shadows about objects, as he stood facing her, his eyes rivetted upon her, drinking in greedily all her womanly beauty. As she gazed a huge cloud of dust was swept along the confronting avenue carried impetuously by a sudden gust of wind that bent the environing trees and foliage with its impelling force, the reflected shadows of the cloud adding gloom to the room for an instant.

"A storm is coming," the man remarked.

The woman might not have heard his utterance for all the notice she took of it. She continued to gaze in the same direction without turning to her companion or moving her position in the least. With her immovable countenance, her manner of indifference and her hands resting calmly one on the other in front of her, she looked a picture of placidity. Finally, after a few moments' quiet she spoke:

"There was so considerable a time between your last visit and this," was her comment in quiet accents still looking out the window, "that I began to think—think you had decided not to come again, and——"

"And you—you missed me?" he cried eagerly, triumphantly, his stupendous vanity rising supreme, believing for the time being that at last he had made the inroad through her armour of reserve and coldness that he had been trying to make so long; "missed me because I was absent so long? I——"

"And I began to think there was a possibility that you were going to play the part of a man," she went on somewhat louder after the instant pause and interruption as if she had not heard him or been interrupted, still gazing out the window and never casting a glance toward the one addressed; "play the part of a man and realize the cowardly part you had been playing in your persecution of me, and remain away as any man with any principle would do, and never darken my door again." As she concluded, her eyes calmly searched his countenance for an instant.

The man's face fell at the realization of the great mistake he had made and he winced under the lash of her words. A perceptible flush of anger and shame for an instant suffused his face till he recov-

ered his customary sang froid manner which he did in a few moments. He was thoroughly indurated in mind and body and callous to the darts that would have pierced another through and through, but which merely pricked his armour lightly on the surface, which was nearly all that happened in this instance, for the injury to his vanity was healed quickly.

When he digested the full import of her words for the fraction of a minute he laughed aloud at the idea that she had been foolish enough to entertain, and he rivetted his eyes boldly upon her countenance.

"Leave you, and remain away, and never darken your door?" he asked ironically with slow deliberation and questioning nods, still laughing. "Oh, no! oh, no!" he went on in the same manner with the same risibility. "I'll go on playing the same manly part that I have been playing, devoting much attention to female beauty and attractions. The sex generally looks for that and expects it. It is natural for men to be the pursuer and women the pursued. It has been so since the beginning and will be so until the end. It is natural for her to be coy and reserved and for him to be aggressive and bold; and whether the aggressiveness and boldness be in the manner of the latest high-class society methods, or in that of the most primitive man it is generally effective, appreciated or victorious in the long run if one keeps long enough at it; there is no fear of its being otherwise."

The woman now looked at him coldly, defiantly and a dangerous gleam appeared in her eyes. If the man had known what it signified his cowardly heart would have quailed as it had never done before.

"Do you not fear to go too far?" she asked deliberately in a warning manner, meaning to apprise him of some danger he incurred.

The only reply she received was a mocking laugh, a shake of the head and a look of effrontery.

She did not change her manner one whit, but continued to eye him coldly, warningly.

"Do you wish more money than you have already gotten from my husband?" she went on with unusually deep deliberate emphasis on her words. "It might not be beneath your manly nature to take it from a woman. Blackmailing, I would think, should be one of the callings of a gentleman of your stamp." There was not only scorn and contempt in her look, but in her every word and gesture.

She now desired to make him menacing in a very aggressive manner so as to nerve her for the part she was to play. It seemed that she had succeeded to a considerable extent, for he was quick to deny the imputation.

"Oh, no!" he cried with spirit. "I do not want money. What I have gotten I will pay back—pay back as soon as I can. It is you—you I want," he went on impassionately; "you who have all along disdained me; you who have refused me your hand all along since I first met you here. But I will hold your hand, yes, hold you in my arms, too, and—and kiss your lips, too, if I like. You will not deny me that because you cannot deny me anything if I choose to enforce my claim." He regarded her boldly through the gathering gloom of the room that was continually becoming more intensified from the darkening threatening sky without, as he uttered the threats, and even drew a step or two menacingly nearer her.

He was much more boastful and menacing than she had looked for or expected.

She drew herself up, facing him with flashing eyes and clenched hands. "You never will," she cried, her voice shrill and defiant. "No, you never will."

As she spoke her hand sought the fold at the side of her dress and touched the hard metallic instrument hidden therein. She felt nerved at the time to do anything. She felt she could have killed the man with no more compunction than she could have crushed some small crawling reptile or insect under her foot. As the moments fled she wondered how she had not done it and did not do it still. It was not any feeling of compassion for the wretch that withheld her, or the fear of the remorse the act would bring to her, or even the dread of any punishment of the law, for all these she had considered fully. She knew that some women had killed men for no more cause and their needs had been acclaimed by the world as heroic. She felt she would be doing only that which circumstances compelled her, and she would be wreaking richly deserved punishment upon the offender.

The man's bold eyes quailed at her gaze and manner and he drew back a little.

"Some men have lost their lives for no worse offence than yours," she cried warningly, her gleaming eyes regarding him steadfastly under knitted brows.

"I shall not lose mine," he rejoined with a show of self-confidence.

"Don't be too sure." She calmly eyed him and spoke in a low voice that was in marked contrast to her previous deportment of wrath and disdain. She was entirely indifferent to the man in this in-

stance, feeling a confidence that she held him in the hollow of her hand.

"I am sure in this case that you will say nothing to John about the matter; you dare not, you cannot!" The man emphasized his utterance with stress of voice, gestures of hand and head that bespoke the utmost confidence. It seemed as if his very manner was leading him on to the crisis that menaced him, and the dangerous brink, for the calmness of the woman was equally as dangerous, if not more so than her previous visible wrath had been if he had only known. But the expression of each face was hidden much from the other in the encompassing gloom of the room.

He was beginning to frame more words upon his lips of the previous nature to emphasize the confidence he felt in his position, when the storm that had been heralded by gradually growing darkness and forceful gusts of wind, now burst suddenly in all its wrath in torrential downpours of rain that beat upon the ground and foliage impelled violently thither by the onward sweep of the irresistible gusts of wind tearing, driving and hurling itself through the trees and along the avenue, bending and rending the branches and scattering the leaves upon the ground, carrying them swirling, fluttering, along the roadway. Its extreme great violence was of short duration, however, for in a few minutes the storm assumed a more moderate aspect, with lessening downpour of rain and diminishing violence of wind. These latter moderate manifestations continued as if they had set in to last some considerable time.

The two figures in the room stood regarding the storm in silence when it burst and was at its height, neither uttering a word, each occupied deep-

ly for the instant in thought and in contemplation of the wrath of the elements.

Now the woman spoke in a low warning voice, breaking this silence maintained by each that the interrupting violent outburst of the elements had brought about.

"Do not be too sure. Do not make the mistake that it is only men who can avenge a wrong," she went on quietly with set, determined face. "Women have avenged wrongs before now."

In the gloom she could not see the other's countenance plainly and note the effect her words had upon him. She felt she would rather warn him of a danger impending from another quarter before it fell—a danger she was convinced would fall soon when the further provocation for delivering it was given. When this was given, she now made up her mind, her vengeance would fall without failure and without further delay, and she nerved herself for the crisis.

A sardonic grin of confidence was the man's re ply to her warning, and he was framing some retort in accordance with his feelings when she proceeded without giving him a chance to answer.

"A man is the stronger and proper being for wreaking vengeance," she went on in her previous quiet manner, "but a woman when she is driven to corner will——"

Her further utterance was interrupted by a violent gust of wind bursting in the hallway, sweeping through the partly open doorway dividing them from that outer section of the house. It was admitted by the opening of the front door and the entrance of someone herein. In a moment, before they could collect their thoughts, the outer door was closed, closing out the violence of the storm,

and John Langworth stood within the entrance of the reception room with a dripping umbrella in one hand, his hat in the other and the rain running from his storm drenched garments.

He gazed about for a moment or two just discerning those present, his eyes taking some time to become accustomed to the gloom of the room and not recognizing the man in the glance.

Meantime, the other two had been collecting their thoughts and recovering from the surprise of the sudden apparition. The woman was the first to achieve this. As she did so, her mind was made up in an instant and her determination taken on a certain course of action she was to follow in the circumstances.

"John, John, you're wet," she cried solicitously, drawing near him. "You ought to change your clothes." Besides the agitation that moved her there was a low sadness in her voice and a wistfulness in her eyes different to her usual cheerful greeting, or attempt at this, which he noticed immediately, and it gave him some concern.

"It is of no consequence," was his reply. "The rain is a warm one; it will not hurt. It came down in such torrents for a minute or two that the umbrella was of little use." While he spoke he turned and deposited his umbrella in the receptacle in the hall and hung his hat up.

Hilkley Tweedwell seemed to take his cue from the woman's actions and when the husband turned and faced them again, he advanced with outstretched hand in greeting.

"How are you, Langworth?" he cried in affable cheery tones. "The elements are certainly unpropitious for those who have to be about outside."

There was no evidence in the man's bearing or voice of embarrassment or constraint.

The woman had been prepared for some of this, but not for so much unabashed affrontery, and with flashing eyes and indignant mien she sprang between the two men, her hand raised guardingly to bar the way of the advancing form of the visitor.

"Don't touch his hand, John—his loathsome hand," she cried in shrill warning accents, "there's pollution in it, in his vile touch." Then she turned from her husband to the offender. "You scoundrel, you low, hypocritical cur," she went on facing him now beside herself with indignation. "How dare you play such a part—such a hypocritical villainous part with my husband before me, before my very eyes, after insulting me so, and expect I am to be a silent witness and conniver of it?"

Hilkley Tweedwell came to a sudden stop, his whole faculties paralyzed for the time being, unable to articulate, to move or to think, his craven heart sinking within him like a lump of lead, his knees weakening and trembling, all his previous boldness and sang froid debonnair suavity, that he was so wont to exercise on the unsuspecting and defenseless, vanishing in an instant, leaving him as inert and helpless as an infant. It was the last happening he had expected and the last for which he had been prepared. He had felt as great a security from any untoward revelations of his reprehensible conduct as any man could have felt who was the sole holder of the secret securely infolded within himself. He had believed the woman utterly helpless to open her mouth on the matter; too much cowed in fearing a further revelation, that she would do anything to keep from her husband the revealing that had now been made.

John Langworth was almost as much surprised. For a few moments he stood paralyzed in action and thought, rooted to the spot, his eyes wide open in astonishment, staring at the confronting forms, hardly comprehending for a time. For a moment when he could reason, the suggestion that his wife was bereft of her sanity entered his mind. However, there was too much righteous indignation, too much impressibility stamped upon her countenance and in her manner for him to entertain this hypothesis for more than an instant, and in an instant it was gone.

When Hilkley Tweedwell began to recover himself, which he did gradually, after the first stunning momentary surprise had passed away, this same idea entered his head. He thought she might possibly have been suddenly deprived of her right mind. It was the only way he could account for her action that might bring about an exposure of the matter she had been so desirous of guarding from her husband's knowledge. He had never possessed much faith in woman's loyalty to her wedded mate, and to the idea that duty would impel her to make a revelation against her interest and desire. With the former idea in his mind he seized upon it, when he could gather his faculties, to clear himself in the husband's eyes.

He raised his hands protestingly.

"My God, Langworth!" he cried imploringly, "your wife must have lost her reason; gone suddenly mad; become subject to hallucinations. I insult her, I insult her—never! Never would I be guilty of such!"

As he went on protesting, he assumed an appearance of puzzled scrutiny of the woman and injured innocence of himself. Then paused, shaking his

head with impressive deliberation, looking from one to the other, but meeting the gaze of either only momentarily, the light of the room now showing the confronting countenances more plainly from the lessening darkness without.

This denial but added to the woman's scorn and indignation which had been far from exhausted at the conclusion of her outburst, for she had stood confronting the offender, her whole manner and attitude bespeaking the utmost contempt and indignation when her voice had ceased to give utterance to the feelings that moved her.

Now at this imputation she proceeded with none the less feeling of indignation.

"The man's an arrant knave, an utter scoundrel as well as a thorough coward at heart," she cried. "He is good at threatening a woman—holding over her head, her weak head, a threat of exposure to gain his ends. But in a man's presence he denies it all—makes himself out a liar as well to escape the consequences." As she spoke she turned at intervals from her husband to the other with a gesture of contempt and a look of withering scorn.

Hilkley Tweedwell cared little now for the scorn of the woman's utterance, the bitterness of her words that held him up so unmercifully to contempt. It was the position in which he found himself that gave him so much concern and made him cower and shrink within himself.

All he tried for was to restrain her from further revelations, and illusion the husband on what had already been unfolded. With this intention he proceeded instantly:

"You mistake—mistake my intentions, my motives," he protested in broken hurried utterances, his heart quaking and his limbs shaking with fear,

his dread of consequences lending speed to his tongue.

"It is all a mistake, a great mistake, a misinterpretation of my intentions," he hurried on appealingly turning to the man when he realized the ineffectiveness of his words on the woman.

"Did you not threaten me with exposure?" the the latter asked with impassioned force of utterance and gesture, her agonized countenance bespeaking the full depth of despair she felt.

As she spoke, the man's hands were raised imploringly, protestingly, his head shaking warningly for her to desist. But heeding him not she went on and said:

"Did you not approach me time and time again with covert threats? Did you not say that——"

"No, no!" he interrupted, drowning her voice. "It's all a mistake, all a mistake, you're laboring under. It's a delusion of the mind; some hallucination."

He could not understand how useless all his efforts were now in arresting the impending disclosures she seemed determined on unfolding to her husband. In her long dread and agony to avoid this, and uncertainty in which she had been living the past few weeks with the possibility of the disclosures she had passed through her valley of Hinnom and was so tired, seared and scorched with pain and suffering in the ordeal that she could not now conceive of any worse suffering befalling her than she had already endured, and she was prepared for anything.

Her husband held his hand up before the man to enjoin silence, to allow her to proceed. His deportment was stern and constrainedly quiet. He had

not spoken since he entered the house and referred lightly to his drenched condition.

Thus ensured from interruption, she proceeded, "John, John," she cried, her hands stretched toward him appealingly as was her gaze, "what I am going to tell you now I withheld from you only because of the pain—pain and suffering the knowledge of it would cause you, not that I wanted to deceive you in the least. I would not have deceived you for the world if there had been any way of avoiding doing so." Anguish and despair marked her countenance, and her voice sounded like a long wail of agony.

"Unknown to you, John, but—but known to this man," she went on brokenly, in agonizing gasps, moving her eyes from the countenance of the one addressed, past his form, to the distant confines of the room, piercing the gloom there and her mind resurrecting a far distant scene across a long span of years, "we met, you—you and I, many years ago." Mutely her eyes met his appealingly for an instant.

The cloud on the brow of the husband darkened, his eyebrows contracted, meeting in a strained puzzled expression, his breath came hard and fast, but he did not speak. In fact, he was so surprised and dazed at the unfolding that he did not know for sure whether he heard aright for the time being. All he could do was to gaze fixedly at his wife.

The other man stood rooted to the spot seemingly unable to move or articulate any more, his eyes wildly scanning one countenance and the other, alternating chills and flushes of heat passing through his trembling body. In the passing moments, however, he tried to pull himself together, and stood sullen and dejected with an effort at a deportment

of defiance, his gaze wandering from the faces of the others to the doorway beyond the confines of which he wished he was past. But the form of the master of the house blocked the way to the aperture, and his eyes turned away.

"It—it was a night long—long ago," she proceeded with the same voice and look of anguish, again gazing past the man's form into space, but more brokenly in utterance. "It was in a New York City resort—an amusement place, that—that I had always wished to forget. A night you will recall if you think. Then I met"—she ventured an affrighted look of agony at the one addressed—"my late husband and you and this man. I—I said something jokingly at the time about our—our meeting again, if you can recall. Some strange fate seemed to destine it so—destine it that we should meet again, the same as some strange fate seemed to destine that this evil man should come and work my undoing."

Shrinkingly she stood before her husband, her hands moving appealingly toward him as she spoke, or opening and clenching in despair. Every look and gesture was pregnant of the utmost pain and suffering, and every word she uttered bespoke the deepest anguish.

Speechless, John Langworth followed his wife in her explanation, the look in his burning eyes riveted upon her agonized countenance, alternating time and again from an expression of puzzled scrutiny to a blank stare. For a time as she proceeded he was scarcely able to grasp the import of her words and meaning, hardly conscious that he was in his wakened senses, that he heard aright, and that it might not be some strange fantasy of the mind, or some hallucinating dream of sleep. Then

as she went on and he began to catch the import of her utterance, and out of the mist of years loomed the scene her words resurrected to his mind, and it grew in vividness, his form became strained and rigid, his hands clenched and immovable, his mind like his body strained to the utmost, his breath withheld in the intensity of his emotions, his eyes wide and staring at his wife.

The scene of the concert garden rose before him gradually until he saw it vividly as when he was there of yore himself. He heard the voices in song again, and heard the instrumental music; saw the glittering lights, the tawdry surroundings in decorations and in animated beings; heard the clinking of glasses and saw the smoking, drinking throng gathered about. The forms of his two student companions stood before him and he heard their gibes once more. Then again he saw them join the strange women, and heard the utterance of the youngest of the latter as with painted face and dyed hair she passed before him at departure and called him "Joseph," and heard her inane giggle.

At this his eyes wandered from his wife's countenance into space for an instant and back, and as they rivetted themselves again upon her countenance he gave a gasp—a long plainly audible gasp—his pent-up breath bursting forth in an unrestrainable gush. His lips moved in an effort to utter some word, but his tongue failed to articulate. Annetta was the name his surprised mind tried to form upon his lips, but in his first full realization that this woman and his wife were the same his tongue was paralyzed and his voice dumb.

The woman gazed for a moment or two with affrighted eyes at her husband. "John, John, I wished to tell you long ago," she said in appealing

tones. "But I could not, I could not. I wanted to tell you before our marriage, but I could not do so. I was weak and loved you so; you were so strong and determined and would have your way. I let my love overmaster that which I thought was my duty and right, and bowed to your will. It is this matter that his man has been holding over my head—holding over my head and terrorizing me all these weeks."

The husband gazed around in bewildered silence for a few moments. Then, when he turned to his wife he seemed to have gathered his faculties and natural self-control.

"What was it he wanted?" he inquired in deep hoarse tones; "was it money—more money than he had already got?"

The woman shook her head, then turned away from the questioning gaze.

He needed no further explanation. The truth flashed upon his mind instantly, and his gaze rested upon the man, dark set and threatening, a luminous fire burning between his narrowed lids. He never moved his burning eyes from the craven man's countenance, drinking in every feature with set jaws and clenched hands, his breath coming hard and fast he faced the offender.

"So this is the way you pay for favors conferred?" he asked of the cowering wretch. There was a strange, low, ominous calm in his utterance that sent a chill through the craven heart of the one addressed, and his gaze fell to the floor. He appeared to thoroughly collapse as if he could hardly hold himself together, his knees shook, and his very teeth chattered audibly. He believed vengeance was coming sure and swift.

The master of the house eyed the cowering

wretch in silence for a few moments, a mingling feeling of contempt and indignation moving his being.

"Do not cower like that, man," he said in spirited tones; "this is not the West where the frontier laws prevail and merited vengeance is meted out individually. Look up, man, and tell me about this. Make some excuse at least—some palliating excuse for your conduct. You have been bold—very bold in dealing with a woman it appears—bold in insulting her. Be a little consistent and show some of this boldness before a man, before her husband. I am only a man, one man the same as yourself, of flesh, blood and bone."

Hilkley Tweedwell did not take courage nor did his manner change under this fire of words and taunts, for taunts they became, bespeaking much irony and contempt as the indignant husband proceeded. He returned the same cowering spiritless, nerveless demeanor, apparently in a state of collapse, uttering not a word in defence. Once or twice his eyes met the others, but he showed no spirit there, and his lips essayed some movement, but he did not speak. A helpless, hopeless blank look of fear marked his countenance.

The woman was silent as she gazed at the craven. She was comparing his previous bold manner to her with his deportment now.

"The man is a craven, an utter coward as I thought," she muttered inaudibly to herself. "I believe he would crawl and grovel upon the ground to a strong man that he feared."

After a strained silence of a few moments more John Langworth spoke:

"Some men would wreak vengeance upon you for what you have done, but I will not. There are sev-

eral reasons probably why I do not do so. You may judge some of them, and thank your luck that I consider such matters. You have often said that you never had a chance. Well, this will be one chance that you have had that you did not deserve."

Though the husband's utterance now bespoke nothing ominous or threatening, nevertheless his aspect was none the less forbidding. His eye bore a dangerous gleam, his voice carried an ominous ring and there was much danger bespoken in the set of his jaw.

"You may go," he said still blocking the doorway with his form. "You can take your worthless life with you, your dirty putrid soul. I saved it on that stormy night, partly at the risk of my own. But if I had known then what carrion I was dragging to the shore, the tide would have carried it down for food for the fishes, which it would have been if not for me. You can go and never darken my door again." He moved aside and pointed to the exit. "And never cross my path again if you can help it, for I do not know what the consequences might be if I met you in the western country where I met you before."

Hilkley Tweedwell made no answer. He simply bowed his head without looking at either, or to the right or to the left. He took his hat and moved toward the exit with slouching hesitancy, not looking up once. With bent head he passed through the hall, opened the door, meeting a violent gust of wind and rain, passed out into the storm closing the door and was gone.

The husband and wife stood immovably still till the other was gone, neither deigning him a look as he passed, their gaze fixed upon space, neither ut-

tering a word, the man still feeling somewhat as if in a dream, the woman's faculties clear and alert to the reality of all the happenings. Then when they were alone they turned and looked at each other in the same silence, their countenances strained and set. As they gazed at each other the man's face softened wonderfully.

"Come, Annetta, my wife," he said in quiet tones approaching the one addressed and placing his arm shelteringly about her. "Come, you do not look well. You are very tired I know. Come to your room and rest; you need it much; you will be much better there."

She did not answer, but looked up wistfully at her husband, and he led her away.

CHAPTER XXI.

"You look tired too, John," the woman murmured, eying her husband with deep concern, after he had led her to the lounge in her room, seated himself in a chair facing her and she was resting easily in a reclining position.

The gray light from a leaden sky filtering through an atmosphere of incessant moderate rain was penetrating the windows less obstructedly than in the apartment they had left below, falling with greater clearness upon objects, showing the man's countenance much more deeply lined and its aspect much more worn than she had ever seen it before. As she fully noted his appearance a great anguish welled in her heart, filling her being with the deepest pity for the suffering man.

The husband did not reply to the remark on his appearance. He was trying to fully collect his thoughts, to grasp the import of all that had been revealed to him in the recent meeting below. It all seemed more like some great hideous, fantastic dream than reality; all that had been made known to him of the treachery of the man he had thought a friend, and whom he had befriended and aided so well, and the extraordinary unfoldings about his wife's past.

The latter was the most difficult to grasp of all. Thoughts of it, and recallings of what had been unfolded to him flitted through his mind confusedly. His gaze wandered about his wife's countenance searchingly, curiously to find in it the full confirmation of her story, though he was never wont to

doubt a word she said, and did not doubt in this instance. As he drank in every lineament of her countenance, every expression of her mobile face, every changing look of her steadfast eye, he failed to recall any resemblance to the form and countenance of the woman of the brief meeting of the years ago, with the light dyed hair, the light laughter and still lighter inane giggle that accompanied her jesting manner to him when she spoke and called him Joseph.

The wife read much of what was passing in his mind and moved uneasily under his scrutiny. Her face hardened and a look of some defiance came into her eyes for an instant.

"For heaven's sake, John," she cried, in a thin shrill voice, as she rose to a sitting position, "do not look at me like that! Say something, for heaven's sake! Reproach me if you will, but say something." She looked imploring at him as she concluded, her hands moving entreatingly toward him.

The man's calm eyes opened with some surprise at the outburst.

"Reproach you?" he asked, slowly in quiet tones, gazing sadly with a wistful look of puzzled inquiry into her eyes, "Why, how could I reproach you? What could I reproach you for?" He shook his head as he gazed sorrowfully at her in silence for a few moments. "I was simply puzzled," he went on to explain in the same quiet manner, "simply puzzled at it all, and it is even yet somewhat hard for me to realize it all and fully understand."

The woman's face softened as she listened to this explanation, and the look she returned bespoke some of the gratitude she felt. Then she gazed at him in silence for some time, her countenance immovable. She was not only trying to divine much

of what was passing in his mind, but was deeply engaged gathering her own thoughts upon some matter. She seemed as if she had accomplished the latter. At this her deportment changed and her face became more set.

She sat a few feet from her husband, her hands resting upon her knees, her gaze now turned away from him, looking into space, not a muscle of her form moving, not even an eyelid, as perfectly motionless as a statue. Her posture, however, was that of relaxation rather than rigidity. Only her face bespoke chiselled setness of inanimate marble. There was nothing in her bearing or expression of countenance bespeaking despair—black despair of one beaten and worsted in life's struggle, crushed under the weight of the misfortune that had pursued her and fallen so mercilessly—but rather that which betokened a resigned bowing to the workings of fate, fate that had been so inexorable, cruel, pitiless, relentless. Her mouth was set in its customary contour, her broad forehead was smooth and placid between the halo of dark hair and arched brows. There was much quiet dignity in her poise, even some pride, and at times a manner of defiance. It was only in her mobile dark eyes, turned away from the man, that some of the pain that moved her could be descried—that agonizing pain that was cruel and crushing.

At last she turned to the man as if to speak, her lips moving, moistening themselves in preparation, her eyes resting calmly upon his countenance. The husband met her gaze frankly, his sympathetic look encouraging her.

Then she spoke, her voice low and deliberate, her dark eyes at intervals moving from his countenance to the furtherest confines of the room, their strained

gaze of intensity and the sometimes knitting brows bespeaking the emotions that moved her and her efforts at self-control, the control she gained as she proceeded.

"Perhaps I ought to explain," she said, her hands clasping and unclasping somewhat nervously upon her lap, "how it was that I came to be in the position in which you once saw me—that position which I need not tell you is more than humiliating to me to recall as it has been so long to me—and in which your once companion found me and not long afterward married me."

At the first information of what she was about to unfold the man felt like restraining her, and was about to raise his hand and his voice in doing so, but noting her intensity of manner and thinking the unbosoming would do her good, he remained silent.

"That I will explain now," she proceeded. "To go into it fully would be a rather long story; but I will be as brief as possible, my desire being only to justify myself before you.

"Why your companion should have married me I do not know, and I cannot explain. He, however, was not the first man in fairishly good circumstances and of some intelligence to marry a woman out of my position, knowing fully what he was doing, for men who have been even much better off than he have done the same. The matter is really inexplicable, and I will not try to explain it. He wanted to marry me, and I being very young, ignorant and thoughtless, readily consented, seeing the material advantage of such a union. As I told you before, I did not love him, nor profess to love him. I was honest enough in that respect—much more honest than many of my sisters of a higher standard of morality."

She raised her eyes frankly to her husband's countenance at this statement and regarded him in silence with a calm steadfast look for a few moments that bespoke much strength and self-control.

There was now in her set calm deportment, and the look in the depth of her soft liquid eyes, much that recalled to the man their first meeting in the present surroundings, and the impression she then gave him of serene earnestness and strength of character. He nodded an encouraging acquiescence, and she proceeded.

"But this is not principally what I was most desirous of explaining,' she said in her quiet, deliberate tones. "To do so I will have to begin far back in the beginning. This was at Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where I was born, as I have previously told you, and where my earliest recollections began. My recallings of the place are dim and shadowy; but out of this shadowy recallings there is one thing that stands out clear to my view; that is the condition of continual poverty and striving to exist on very small means that beset my family and the families surrounding us. That awful spectre of want, or threatened want, that continually haunts the poor, the thoughtful poor, night and day—and there are a good many of the latter, despite the contrary statements—was apparent to me even in these early years.

"My parents were poor—very poor, as I have before told you—but honest people in their way; but with poor ideas of bringing up a family, as many people in their class have the same as all other classes.

"Of the children there were three girls only. It seemed that fate had tried to make the burden as heavy and hard as possible by designing them all

these helpless beings. I was the youngest of the three. All the family is dead, I believe, except myself, as I told you. Both my parents and the youngest sister of the two elder ones are dead, I know. The eldest that was married may be living for all I know, but she has been dead to me at least for a long time.

"My father was a teamster, a rugged man with some crude ideas of religion and things in general, and possessing many good qualities. I believe the best I have in me I inherited from him." She paused and looked sadly across the mist of years for a few moments, then proceeded.

"We moved to Philadelphia when I was very young. You may have heard the place referred to, as I have, as the most Christian city in America. On that I will not comment. There are, however, many places of worship there in evidence, as there is a far from scant attendance at them, if conditions are now as I recall them, of which I have a vivid recollection.

"It was at that period when I can look back and clearly recollect things that we moved there. We moved into a poor section of the extreme southern end of the city, where the city streets and dwellings bordered the environing vegetable farms, of which there were many nearby with their stretch of growing vegetables in the spring, summer, and fall months, and the wide reach of barrenness in winter. The scene is well stamped upon my memory, as it was about the only view that could lay claim to rural landscape that my eyes were wont to rest upon for many years. And so you know——" she paused and gazed in silence through mist dimmed eyes resultant of the recalling for a few moments—"there were times when I gazed across the landscape, com-

prising a good deal that was very unlovely, with its dusty roads, heaps of rubbish and huge growing weeds, to the far distance where the two rivers meet that I thought it was very beautiful. Often I gazed upon it, as we resided in the last street down, and the window of the bedroom where I slept looked out over an unobstructed view. And despite the poverty and general and continual struggle for the family to exist on small means, there were times when we were really happy.

"Nearly all the people surrounding us were of the poor laboring class with a sprinkling of the artisan class. They were somewhat racially mixed, but mostly all of American birth, the foreign born element not having invaded that section of the city at that period to any extent, to which I learned afterward that it was doing with an entirely new foreign element to that which had previously been coming to the country.

"The women were chiefly of that kind, including my maternal parent, that find considerable time standing in groups about their doors gossiping with arms akimbo, or flitting in and out of each others' houses, indulging in the exchange of the latest gossip about their neighbors and other matters. If the gossip had been wholly of the kind that one would naturally expect from women of their stamp—trivial gossip of their sex, and occasional scandal of a delicate nature—it would not have been much out of place. But, unfortunately, it was not, for it touched at times on subjects in a jesting manner that ought to be sacred among good women, and drifted occasionally to that kind wherein the stories narrated depend chiefly for their wit to their grossness.

"I have a vivid recollection of gatherings about hucksters' carts, wherein this amusement was not

infrequently indulged in amid the bargaining and purchasing, and the stories and jokes indulged in with the presiding male not infrequently reached very youthful and tender ears, including my own, that were keenly alert to their import and significance. There were times, however, not infrequently when the women made half efforts at concealment of the nature of these jokes and stories from the very young with significant looks, nods and half-whispered utterances that only intensified the curiosity of those supposed not to hear or understand in listening and solving their import. I have often since wondered what effect this had upon the very youthful mind like my own, for their talk was indelibly stamped upon my memory and often possessed my mind, and I have often wondered since how women could be so lacking sense as not to know that young children possess faculties of understanding as well as themselves. In this atmosphere the mystery of sex became early a revealed book to me, as it did to many of the young about me. As I look back now, and all the time since I began to have some proper reasoning faculties, which I believe I early developed, this which I have described, and which is probably not so uncommon, has always seemed so senseless, and perhaps so injurious in its influence, that I have wondered how people, let alone women, could so entertain themselves. In credit to my paternal parent, although a rough, uncultured man, I must say that I never heard him indulge in the semblance of a questionable joke, story or the least profanity. For this I bear him a very tender recollection, for he must have possessed a just appreciation of his responsibility to the rising generation to guard their ears from needless contamination.

"In this atmosphere I was reared, my mind keenly alert and conversant of much that children of my age are supposed to be ignorant of. I tell you all this, John"—she looked calmly and searchingly into her husband's eyes—"so that you may rightly judge me in comparing the early surrounding influences of mine with your own, which I know from what you have said must have been elevating and entirely free from bad influences."

She became silent, rested her chin in the palm of her hand and meditatively looked away from the man into the distant confines of the room. The latter was silent too. He sat in the same position as the woman, with his chin resting in his hand. His steadfast eyes were bent upon her with a searching, compassionate look. Twice or thrice his head moved in slow inclinations, but he did not speak.

Then, after the lapse of a few moments, the woman resumed, and said:

"Several years before I had reached my teens the knowledge of things that would have shocked older mortals of different surroundings raised little more than the mildest curiosity in me. This was such as how sex is turned to commercial advantage. The first revelation of this kind came to me from a knowledge of the married existence of my eldest sister, who was at least a decade older than I, there having been several children born between us, but fortunately having passed to the great unknown before they attained more than a few months old. She had married an artisan, who followed the occupation of machinist, and who occasionally lost time from work owing to sickness and dull trade. They had been married but a year or two when I learned somehow that they were living rent free in the dwelling they occupied.

"I would not have you think from all this that I am telling you that the generality of the people of the neighborhood about me, and with which I came in contact, were immoral, for I am sure they were not. I would not do them such wrong as to cast unjust reflection on them. Most of them were honest, good moral people, and generally led upright, honest lives. Many of them, however, might have been much better. But we ought not to be too severe in condemning them when all is considered—the lack of uplifting influences, the continual struggle amid surroundings of which much is sordid and mean, the surroundings of which there is little chance of bettering, and of which much tends to develop baseness in many rather than high ideals. Much may seem reprehensible to you, as it does to me, in our superior environments, and as it did when I began to rise above theirs, but it might all have seemed different if my surroundings and limitations had been as theirs, for the majority of people are a product of environments and circumstances as well as heredity. Some, I believe, there are who can rise superior to all these influences, heredity, environment and circumstances, no matter how onerous they all may be, but they are very rare individuals indeed. The many fail in better conditions—much better than a combination of all these against them.

"I would have liked to believe as time went on that the husband of my sister was unacquainted with the true conditions, and I often tried to do so, but there were too many hard facts against my establishing that belief in my mind or entertaining it for any considerable period.

"I know, John," she went on after a brief pause, regarding her husband with a steady, penetrating

gaze, "it must strike you with horror at the idea of such a condition and such a man; but I think that such conditions and such men are not so exceedingly rare as generally supposed. They may be due to various causes—moral weakness, physical weakness and the present industrial conditions that mercilessly drives the weak to the wall. Of course we know that real manhood could not sink to such degradation so long as there was some other way—which there always is.

"I early turned to work, or was rather turned to work, to add to the income of the home when the supposed law said I should be at school. I procured employment in a match factory, where the hours were very long and the remuneration very small. The work was very unhealthy, and I was occasionally absent through sickness.

"Afterward I procured a situation in a large department store as cash girl, and when I got old enough was promoted to salesgirl. Here I was thrown amid a better class of my sex than I had ever met before. They were generally well-dressed good-looking and fairly intelligent—qualities that the average Philadelphia salesgirl or saleswoman generally possess—though there was a goodly sprinkling of fools among them, as there generally is among women.

"Especially did they seem to me to be generally good-looking at the period I refer to. This threw them in much temptation. I was often astonished at the ease with which an entire stranger could strike up an acquaintance with some of them, make an engagement to meet them at night, and take them to theatres and suppers, if he was fairly passable in appearance, possessed a gullable tongue and spoke of his position or prospects being good.

"There were many of the girls, nevertheless, who would not listen to such men if they talked anything but the business they were about or supposed to be about. Strange, despite all the influences that should have worked otherwise, I was among the latter class and attended only to my business when I was at work.

"My unmarried sister, Ella, the next to me in age, was also employed in a large department store. She was dissimilar to me in much, for I always recall her as spirited, thoughtless and light-hearted, like many of her companions. The concern where she worked was one that paid notoriously small wages. However, I do not suppose the pay was much different to the other places of its kind, as it is small enough in all of them. Its proprietor, who was also its general manager, some time later gained an unenviable reputation in Philadelphia—at least among a considerable number of its people who happened to know of the facts, or had learned something of the matter—for the manner in which he was wont to reply to the requests of salesgirls for increased wages, by asking them if they could not find a man friend to aid them. One would be apt to conclude, who was conversant with worldly affairs, that such a concern, directed by one so unscrupulous and villianous, would expand and wax fat, as is generally the case in such like circumstances. But contrary to what would be naturally expected, the business decreased as time went on, as others in the same line expanded, the place was reduced in size and ultimately a few years ago it went out of business entirely, some Nemesis seemingly pursuing it and overtaking it gradually till ruin came finally.

"Ella was said to be the best looking in the fam-

ily. I did not see a great deal of her at this time, as she was very fond of company, which I was not, and always had some place to go. When she came home for the evening meal, which she did not always do, she would soon leave, and I would not see her again until the following morning when I was arising from rest, or had about concluded my breakfast and was about starting out for my place of employment, I choosing to walk rather than ride for the sake of the few pennies I saved thereby, and the health-giving exercise I tried to make myself and others believe it gave me." She paused and looked at her husband with a faint, sad, pitiful semblance of a smile. "The health-giving exercise," she repeated, proceeding with a far-off look, "of walking more than two full miles over generally uneven brick pavements, that held so tenaciously the heat of the scorching sun in summer, and the cold, damp snow, ice and slush in winter and spring, and then standing about ten long hours on my feet behind a counter subject to anybody's whim in an unhealthy atmosphere for wages so pitifully small that it would not have paid my board and clothe me if I had not been living at home." She shook her head slowly for a few moments in silence at this retrospect.

The man also shook his head and remained silent, and no sound broke the quiet save the occasional slight gusts of wind and rain spending their force against the surrounding foliage and the window. But the look he bent upon her through his agonized countenance bespeaking unutterable sympathy told her more than mere words could have done of his feelings for her, and for what she had suffered.

She returned a look of gratitude and proceeded.

"Finally my sister Ella lost her situation and was

out of employment for a considerable time. Even then she did not seem to lack for money except occasionally in paying her board, and was about as much away from home as ever.

"About this time a young man of the neighborhood where we resided was showing me much attention. The generality of the girls of my acquaintance referred to this association as keeping company.

"He occasionally took me out to the park on Sundays and to the theatres at rare intervals, for which kindness I was very grateful. One winter night, a few months before I first saw you, we had been to a theatre and afterward to a restaurant and had some supper. The hour was very late, it was nearly midnight, and we were walking along Chestnut Street, the principal thoroughfare of the city, toward the street cars that would take us near home, when I saw a solitary female form on the other side of the street walking in the opposite direction to us and soon to pass us. The streets of Philadelphia used to be very deserted at such a late hour. I soon saw that it was my sister Ella, and the sight of her at that time of night, walking alone along that almost deserted street so far from her home and the direction of it made me turn sick and weak and hot and cold at intervals, as the resurrecting of the scene has many a time done so in a lesser degree. I can now see her plainly as I saw her then, and often in the passing years, haunting my memory, has her form risen before me out of the shadows as it did that night, though it is long ago and she has long since passed to the shadows herself when her years were so few. Poor, weak Ella!

"As she drew near I tried not to see her, and looked straight ahead fearful lest I should draw the

attention of my companion in her direction. In this my efforts were in vain, for he saw her, much to my shame. This I knew from the look he gave me, though he passed no remark about her. But his silence upon the matter, after glancing at her and then at me, after she had passed, was so embarrassing to me as if he had remarked about seeing her, if not more so.

"There was a little more familiarity about him that night when he was saying good-by, which I think I would have resented if it had not been for the incident of seeing my sister as we had. But I felt humiliated, cheapened, sick of everything and devoid of my customary pride and dignity. I lost more of this at other meetings—and—it, it was the same, same story. I need not say more.

"After a time he showed a coldness toward me, and the fact was plain that he was tired of me and did not want any more to do with me. Then I met a girl who proposed to go to New York City, holding out alluring descriptions of that place, and I went, as I did not care where I went, I was so glad to get away from those that knew me and my family, and from all the surroundings that had been mine. I was sick of them all." The latter words were uttered in evidently much weariness and sickness of heart.

After concluding she gazed across the room in silent contemplation with a set, immovable stare for a few moments, then buried her face in her hands. The latter action, however, was not resultant of weakness or a breaking down, but due to the utter weariness and anguish of mind.

Throughout the narrative she had shown much evidence of the spirit that had possessed her through life, and little evidence of the woman broken and

crushed. Once or twice her voice had broken slightly and a mist had dimmed her eyes, indicating a weakening, but with an effort she had mastered these and proceeded with strength—calm and strength, her long dominant characteristics.

Now she looked up with much strength in her face, and a little defiance, to meet bravely whatever was befalling her.

The husband rose from the chair and paced nervously across the width of the room, and back and forth, his brows drawn, his eyes bespeaking the agony that moved him.

"God help us all," he said in a choking, trembling voice; "it is a hard world for some of us—for many. The life of the many is a hard and bitter struggle against want, temptation and adversity. Why it should be so with an abundance of everything in the world for all, I do not know, unless it be that selfishness, rapacity and greed, the most primitive animal traits, are yet the most dominant ones. If they are not the most dominant ones, why should men who possess so much, and are supposed to be reasoning beings, exert themselves to the utmost to cheat and crush their fellows by any means possible when that which they may gain will be possessed of but for a brief period, for the longest life is only a short span, and all of us who are living will soon be gone, and the wrong and injury they do may live forever. It almost chokes me now when I realize all you have gone through, my wife, and that that brute who was here should have added so much to your sufferings."

A long-drawn sigh of anguish, almost a groan, escaped him.

"That I did not take him by the throat," he went on with vehemence, clenching his hand and increas-

ing his pace, "and squeeze the life out of him, I do not know, unless it be that he was such an arrant craven, showing no particle of spirit, that I could not touch him." The utter impotency of this outburst of wrath was very enervating and tiring, and after it had subsided he sank spiritlessly into a chair in front of the small table facing the window, resting his face in his hands, with his elbows upon the table for support, and gazed forth at the dismal scene without of dull gray lake and sky.

His wife's eyes followed the direction of his gaze and become rivetted upon the same dreary scene.

"It is a dreary world of suffering and pain," she said, immovably looking without, her breath coming hard and her bosom moving tumultuously. "So much suffering and pain."

"Yes, God help us all, it is sometimes," he murmured. "But you and I will go hand in hand to the end, alleviating each other's burdens and sorrow as we agreed to do at the beginning. You will always have my love and sympathy; you have nothing to fear; you will be always the same to me, as I told you long ago, no matter what betide." The look of compassion bent upon her carried assurance with the words.

She returned a look of gratitude.

"God bless you, John, for your words," she replied; and with him she turned her gaze and looked without again.

The great expanse of lake and sky upon which they gazed was one unbroken gray mass, with no visible meeting line in the far-off haze. The rain was still descending, small fine rain, falling ceaselessly upon the drenched foliage and soddened grass, and driven occasionally in gusts against the window panes. The wind was swaying the trees

and branches murmuring and sighing in accents like a voice in pain and distress. Afternoon was now waning and evening approaching, its descending shadows adding to the gloom of the day, and though the season was summer, yet a chill of autumnal intensity was in the air.

As the man continued to gaze upon the scene he felt a drowsiness creeping over him, overmastering him in his weariness. His eyelids closed, a numbness stole over his faculties, and he slept, with his face resting in his hands.

The woman looked from the dreary scene without to the slumbering man. Everything to her bespoke dreariness, pain and suffering. The wind continued murmuring and sighing, the rain descending, sobbing drearily as it fell. She watched the slumbering man for a time without moving. Then she rose to her feet and noiselessly drew a little nearer to him, putting forth her utmost efforts at silence.

"Oh, John," she whispered, "Oh, John, if it had only been different." The words were uttered in a long-drawn sob of anguish, her hands stretching toward her husband as she spoke. Then with a silent, long, lingering look bespeaking ineffable agony, she turned away from him, left the room and stole into the child's sleeping apartment, where it rested in its afternoon slumber.

She kissed the child tenderly without waking it and left as noiselessly as she came, stealing into her husband's room. She had little more than entered when a loud, sharp report rang out, echoing throughout the house, arousing the drowsy domestics from the lethargy in which they had been going about their work, and awakening the slumbering man.

CHAPTER XXII.

At the sound John Langworth's hands fell from his face and he stared around in suddenly awakened bewilderment for a few moments. Then he rose to his feet in the same manner, looking about as the two maids haltingly climbed the stairs and reached the top breathlessly with blanched, affrighted faces.

He had not been in sound slumber, but in a half-asleep comatose condition with troubled visions of his wife flitting confusedly, fantastically across his brain. In that condition the noise that startled him reached his ears like the sharp clap of two boards together.

Now as his faculties cleared and he saw the aspect of the two women, and no evidence of his wife as he gazed around hurriedly for her, who it appeared, had been with him but a minute or two previously, a dread that something terrible had happened to her seized him. This was intensified almost to conviction when his keen nostrils caught the scent of exploded gunpowder.

"Where is she—my wife?" he gasped, springing from the room, meeting the affrighted gaze of the two women, his own eyes for the instant but little less terrified with the dread of the coming revelation than their own.

They looked at him in bewilderment, with blanched affrighted faces and essayed some reply but he did not wait to hear. He brushed them aside and sprang toward the partly open door of his own room. The sight within confirmed the terrible

dread that had possessed him and a moan of anguish burst from his lips. He stood for an instant too overcome to move, too stricken for action, his body reeling.

His wife was lying stretched out upon the bed, the dim gray light from the window falling upon her white face and the nearby environing objects. His own glittering revolver, lying upon the floor by the bedside and the slowly rising diffusing blue smoke reaching the ceiling in a dense mass, told too plainly what had happened. Her eyes were wide open and she moved slightly as if conscious of his presence when he made his appearance.

He was the strong man of action in an instant, and was by her side the next moment looking into her eyes, holding her hand, his blanched face and set, constrained agonized gaze bent upon her searchingly.

"Thank God, she lives," he murmured fervently to himself, conscious beyond doubt of the life in her body from the labored breathing reaching his ears and the accompanied moving of her breast, oblivious for the time being to her possible nearness to dissolution in the realization that she still lived.

The woman heard the words though they were scarcely audible and a great wave of pity for the man moved her being, dimming her large wistful eyes with tears.

"What has happened? Did you do it? How could you do it?" he gasped in hurried agonized accents, his steadfast eyes reproaching her. As he spoke his eyes realizing no visible mark or wound about her that could have been made by a bullet, he commenced to tear open her bodice and underclothing and soon revealed her breast.

"It is here, John." she murmured faintly, "here,"

she added, moving her hand to her left breast. "It is better so," she went on with a calmness that was in marked contrast to her husband's eager, breathless alertness in rendering what help he could to her.

"I want to go, John, I am so tired of it all—it all except your love. I was fearful lest I might lose it now—your love. That I could not endure—endure the possibility of it. I would sooner die a thousand times than live to lose that—live to realize that you thought less of me and your love was becoming or might become a thing of the past. Yes, John, it is better so as it is now. I have been so tired, so utterly tired and worn out for some time. I commenced the battle so early in life that I am now tired out and want to rest."

As she spoke he had located the wound, a small red mark at the lower region of the heart, which was scarcely visible to his first scrutiny, but which was now becoming more plainly seen as the pressure of the clothing was no longer resisting the issuance of the crimson fluid. He then turned to the women standing near and ordered them to hurry for some nearby physicians. Then he procured restoratives which he administered to his wife, and staunching the slight flow from the wound he raised her head higher upon the pillow, with one arm supporting her, and awaited the coming of the doctors.

"It is useless, John," she murmured feebly. "I have made sure of this. Nothing can save me now —nothing. I shall be gone probably before the doctors come; no earthly skill can be of any avail." She turned her eyes pityingly upon him as she spoke, love and sympathy for him moving her to some regret for what she had done.

"But it is better for them to come," she went on

in a resigned manner after two or three moments' silent reflection; "better, for the trouble it will save. But I wish to be alone with you, John, for the short time. I feel myself going now fast. I seem to be drifting away from you at times, and only your hold seems to restrain me. Is it getting darker? Or is it the coming darkness of the closing day?" She asked the latter with a questioning look, then gazed about her into the confines of the distant gloom for an instant and turned her eyes upon her husband's countenance.

The man did not reply after he glanced at the unsettled unchanging gloom of the room which was of the same dreary grayness reflected from the dun sky, the leaden lake and the rain-charged space intervening, that it had been for some time.

A sob escaped him wrung from him despite all his efforts to hold it back. He began to realize that she spoke the truth, and that no earthly power would be able to remedy matters.

For a few seconds no sound broke the stillness, but the faint murmuring of the wind and the light beating of the rain.

"It is hard to leave you so, John," she resumed in the same feeble murmuring tones; "we have been so happy together. But it is better so. Besides, it would all come to an end some day before long. Even the longest life is but a short span, and all who are now here will soon be all gone, as you yourself a little while ago said. And I believe we shall meet again though I do not have much faith in the orthodox stories of the other life, as you know from the talk we have had."

"But it is here I want you," replied the man brokenly. "You have been my life, my whole existence, for which I have struggled these past years

since I met you. How could I now live without you? It would break my heart. You are the only woman that ever entered my life, the only one that I shall ever love. I shall always love you, love you, no matter what intervenes as I told you so long ago when I asked you to be my wife, for your heart and soul are as pure as any woman's ever were, and will always be so to me." He pressed his lips tenderly to the woman's as he spoke the last few words assuring her of his undoubted undying love.

Her sad eyes beamed the gratitude she felt. Her lips moved, but the sound therefrom was such a succession of faint quavering notes that the man had to lower his head even nearer her lips to catch the import.

"Ah, John, you've been good—so good," she murmured. "You are so good that it is hard to part from you, and to realize that this is the end of it all. But we shall meet again, I think we shall. I believe we shall when—when we shall probably remember and forget. Remember much that we would not care to live again without remembering, and forget much too that it is better to forget. Or even if we do not forget that, it may appear in a different light then, to us, in our different understanding—all—all that we would rather forget."

She paused a few moments and resuming, said:

"I believe I am going now, as it is getting much darker and I feel a numbness creeping over me. You will take care of our little one, John; see that she never wants for that care that is necessary for her safety till she reaches that age when she is safe to care—care for herself, or is safe in the care of some good man like—like you, John; like—like you."

Her mind now, like her sight, was becoming densely blurred and clouded. She could scarcely

think any more, or see but the dim outlines of her husband's form and feel but the presence of his hand and arm. If not for these she would have felt she was floating away into space. She made a slight move of her head toward him, and her lips moved, but no sound came from them.

The man pressed his lips to hers. Her eyes closed in a blinding mist, a faint sigh escaped her, and she lay still and inert as two men were shown into the room by one of the maids.

The husband thought she was dead until he slipped his arm from about her and felt the faint beating of her heart

"Does she still live?" asked one of the men drawing nearer the bed.

The former turned with streaming eyes and bowed his head in reply to the inquirer whom he recognized, as well as the other, as a practitioner of the neighborhood. His heart was too near bursting with grief to give utterance in words, and he drew aside still holding the clasped hand of his wife to make room for an examination by the others.

Both had been apprised fully of the nature of the happening, and had come adequately prepared to meet the worst emergency.

The examination was brief. The elder of the two shook his head at its conclusion, and expressed his fears of what conditions showed. He was much older than John Langworth, and much more experienced, as was the other, in medical science.

"It is evident she is very weak and sinking fast," he said, still bending over the form upon the bed and watching the labored breathing. "However," he went on turning hurriedly to the others, "we will try all that can possibly be of any avail."

But after they had tried all that was possible in

improving conditions by the aid of remedial agencies, some of them powerful ones, generally used as a last resort in holding life in the body, any improvement failed to show except but briefly. Then, despite all efforts, there was a gradual sinking. When this was evidently unarrestable the aged practitioner shook his head and said in subdued tones: "Dissolution is apparently close at hand. There is nothing, I believe, would save her. There would not be one chance in a thousand of saving her by an operation, for there has not been from the start, and there is not one chance in a thousand that she would live throughout it. It would be useless, I believe, and is useless."

The only sound that broke the silence for a few moments after this announcement was the sobbing of the two women standing near the door, mingling with the sobbing of the rain without and murmurings of the storm, as all immovably regarded the calm white face and still form upon the bed.

The husband bowed his head resignedly to fate, realizing the inevitable, too stricken for words, scarcely able to realize it all. The end came soon, even sooner than was expected. The practitioner had but made the announcement a minute or two previously when a faint sigh escaped the pale lips, a slight quaver passed over the body and it lay still, still with that awful silence that is appalling to all except those very hardened in soul and body.

The aged doctor bent over the form for evidence of the heart beat and respiration. "She is gone," he said in sad tones as he straightened himself up. "Dead as it is meant we shall all be in a few brief years," he went on gravely, sympathetically gazing at the grief-stricken man, who had realized the end as soon as the others.

John Langworth buried his face in his hands upon the pillow alongside the calm marble face of the woman, and sobs shook his strong frame.

The grave-faced white-haired doctor moved softly from the bedside toward the door and motioned to his less aged companion to follow. Then he waved the weeping housemaids aside and drew the door gently to after him, leaving the sorrow-stricken man alone to his grief, which he thought was best. He led the way into the nearest apartment, which had been the woman's room, and instructed the other to inform the coroner as soon as possible of the happening and signified his intention of awaiting that functionary's coming to explain matters so as to relieve the bereaved man of as much of the trying ordeal as was in his power of doing. From the domestics he learned that their mistress had been in troubled mind and poor health for some time, and the tragedy was likely the result of that condition.

This he unfolded to the coroner when he called, and when the latter was shown into the room where the lonely man still sat with his grief and his dead, his stay was of the briefest and his questions as few as the law demanded as necessary. Then he withdrew, silently nodding to the aged doctor that all was satisfactory.

The latter extended his hand silently to his bereaved fellow practitioner, and told him that the necessary papers would be made out and signed below, and asked feelingly if any further help could be rendered. Receiving a negative reply and thanks for all his thoughtfulness and kindness he withdrew and John Langworth was left alone again with his grief and his dead.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The murky gloom of the wet, stormy evening gave way quickly to darkness of night when John Langworth was left alone, alone save for the silent form lying upon the bed by the side of which he sat. Though the darkness grew about him till he could scarcely discern objects except the marble countenance near him, the alabaster outlines of features so beautiful in contour, but dreadful in their calmness, yet he had no desire to break upon the encompassing gloom with a light, the environing darkness that suited the blackness of his own agony and despair.

As the darkness of night descended and gathered the storming elements gradually ceased their activity. The rain no longer descended in driving gusts against the environing foliage and windows, but came in a faint, steady patter accompanied by a scarcely discernible murmur and sighing, and soon all was about as quiet as the form lying upon the bed.

For a long time the man felt no desire to move, no desire for anything but to sit alone with his dead and his bitter grief, too stricken and overcome to think clearly and fully realize his position. After a time, however, the pain, the sharp, poignant agonizing pain, became a little less acute, a trifle numbed, and he could think somewhat more clearly.

With this change came a recalling of the imparted information of the kindly aged brother practitioner regarding the permit for burial, and with this recalling of what had to take place came an-

other outburst of grief, but with it a clearer understanding of his position and the duty before him that called for his attention. Yet it was difficult for him at times to realize fully that the closed eyes facing him were closed to him for ever, the stilled and beloved voice silenced never again to awaken to sound, and harder yet to understand that a day or two would see the form conveyed to its last resting-place beneath the sod. Difficult also was it to comprehend that the condition brought about had been the happening of but a few hours, all within the compass of a part of this day that was just now closing in about him with all its encompassing gloom. It had seemed a long time ago, much more than a few hours, until he looked back recalling clearly all the happenings of the day—his departure from home in the early forenoon, his cheerful, affectionate good-by to his wife after a light luncheon, with but one anxiety possessing him, the anxiety about her health and manner; his return in the early afternoon, and the revelations and accusations concerning the man he had thought a friend at least, though he had not rated him very highly as such, and the later unfoldings by his wife of her sordid bitter past, with the tragedy following.

Now, when this recalling came clear to him and he thought of the part the man had played, the man whom he had believed a friend, bound by ties of gratitude for services rendered about as great as could be rendered by one mortal to another, one risking his life to save the other's, a thirst for vengeance swept over him like the force of an avalanche. All his inertness vanished, and he rose, pacing the floor with quick, strong strides. It was the first time he had felt a thirst for vengeance since the blow had fallen. Now it welled in his

breast, surging throughout his whole being. He clenched his hand with impotent fury.

"God help him!" he cried. "God help him if he ever crosses my path again, for I'll show him as much mercy as he has shown me and mine. And—God help me!" The latter words were uttered in a long, pitiful moan of anguish—anguish wrung from the innermost depth of his being. He paused as he spoke, and buried his aching, throbbing head in the hollow of his hands. Then he thought of the time when he dragged Hilkley Tweedwell from the surging, onrushing tide to the banks of the river.

"If I but had him there again," he went on, hoarsely, drawing himself up and clenching his hands; "there with my hand at his throat front, facing him squarely, instead of at his back, as when I pulled him from the tide, then I'd drive him back foot by foot, despite his bulk and size. Yes, foot by foot," he cried, in the same hoarse tones, raising his clenched hands before him, his brows knitting, his eyes gleaming, bending his body forward, trembling and tense and pressing his feet with great strength to the floor, as if he held the man in his grasp. "Yes, foot by foot, till he was beyond his depth; then I'd force him from me with all my power into the deep current, and I'd hear again his wild shriek of terror ringing in my ears, as I heard that terrible night before, when his cry drew me to his side, and I would see his carrion carcase going down to death, which it should have gone to in that rushing flow, then—he and I would be quits."

This outburst seemingly did him much good. After it had subsided he felt greatly relieved. A normal calm came over him and he prepared to attend to the matters calling for his service.

During the passing of the following day that in-

tervened that of the tragedy and the consigning of the body to its last resting-place, he decided on the course he was to take governing his future. He felt an utter impossibility to continue in the one he had followed when he had the companionship of his wife. He felt at the best that he was a broken man, but he knew that he would be much more so if he remained amongst the surroundings whose associations would remind him continually of what had been and what might have been so different.

At this realization he heard the West, the great wide North-west, the mother of oblivion, of vastness, illimitableness, of the mountains and the plains, of his once friends and kin, of a primitive, stalwart manhood and morality, though not entirely unsullied by vice, yet of a much cleaner purity in comparison to the crowded hives of men, calling him thither with much greater intensity than had been its once previous calling of him from the older civilization, with its vice and crime that had been repugnant to him. He felt that there he would be away from much that was painful, and his little daughter much more safe from contamination, and he decided to go.

On the morning of the funeral, when he stood alone in the familiar front reception-room in the presence of the dead, taking his last sorrowful unwitnessed farewell of the cold, inanimate form of his wife before the few friends arrived who had been asked to be present at the last rites that custom and religion called for, the little child toddled into the room and to the father's knee as the man stood by the black-draped casket.

The scene was a simple one free from any ostentatious display as was his desire, and as he knew would have been the desire of the one that was gone.

There was no display of costly elaborate wreaths and flowers. A few simple garlands lay upon the casket and nearby, that was all.

From the brightness without, filtering into the dimly-lighted room through the lace curtains and a narrow aperture of the closed Venetian blinds, a long diffused beam of pale golden sunlight fell softly upon the calm marble face of the dead and the wan face bending over it, the living one with a settled calm and pallor, almost matching the other save for the gaunt haggardness that grief and pain had wrought upon it, illuming them both with strange weird lights and shadows. The man looked as if he had passed through so much suffering and pain that all the color had been scorched out of his face, all the light from his eyes and all the vigor and spirit from his tall, strong frame.

The child looked curiously up into the face of the father and then at the face of the dead that could just be discerned from where she stood.

"Is mamma sleeping," she lisped, "sleeping now, papa?"

The man did not reply immediately. His heart was too full for utterance. He had believed that all his tears had been dried up since his great outburst of grief on the day of the tragedy. But now the flood-gates of his sorrow were opened again and tears coursed down his cheeks afresh. He gathered the child up in his arms and kissed her tenderly as she looked wonderingly in his tear-wet face.

"Yes, my darling," he said brokenly, "mamma is sleeping." As he spoke he held the child so she could see and touch the marble countenance. Then hearing a ring at the door-bell and realizing, as he looked at the clock, that the hour for the last rites

had arrived, he put the child down and resumed his previous calm exterior.

The day after the simple funeral when the body had been laid away in a suburban resting-place of the dead, and the bereaved man had dismissed the domestics and said good-bye to them, he took one last look at the home that had been his and his wife's, closed all the shutters, locked everything up and started with his child on his westward journey.

The house had belonged to his wife and he hated to either rent or sell it, and so he left it just as it had been when they had occupied it. He felt there might be a time in years when the keen poignancy and bitterness of his grief had worn away somewhat that he might probably want to look at it again.

As the man and the child journeyed westward, many a pair of eyes on the train looked curiously at the gaunt tragic face of the former, on which the indelible stamp of grief was written, and read in the presence of the little child unaccompanied by a maternal guardian the story of bereavement.

Some kindly fellow passengers spoke to the child and to the man; but though the latter felt grateful for the attention kindly meant and especially to the child, yet he preferred to be alone with his thoughts. He never spoke to anyone excepting the child unless spoken to. He would sit still, eyeing her, tracing the remarkable likeness to the dead mother, gravely and patiently answering all the strange little questions put to him by the lisping tongue as the eyes that so much resembled her mother looked into his own.

"Yes, we are going home," he answered, when they had been passing for some time across the wide boundless prairies, and were reaching the vicinity of the foothills. "We'll soon be home now."

Then he added to himself: "We'll be home where you'll be safe, safe from much that is evil and which besets the footsteps of the many—the many that are the mothers of the race. If they are not early guarded from that which is evil what will come of the race? For depending upon them—the Mothers of Unborn Generations—is much, much that is potent and far-reaching in scope for good and evil, vast, vast, illimitable."

Heavily oppressed in mind and body by the thoughts called forth he sat immovable for a time, his chin resting in his hand, his face set, his eyes gazing into space, but seeing nothing where they were directed.

Then, turning to the child by his side, whose eyes heavy with slumber looked up mutely and met his own, he placed his arm shelteringly about the small form and drew it to him as the eyes closed in reposeful slumber. Then as he gazed at the fair innocent face resting in slumber upon his arm, and out upon the departing dull day with its heavily clouded sky to the far-off distance where the horizon was widely cleft, showing its soft silver lining of ambient light, a wonderful strength and calm came into his face and he drew the child still more shelteringly to him.

[The End.]

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